

# **Nevada Veterans Service Commission**

**December 5, 2008 Meeting**

## **Section 1:**

Meeting Agenda  
Proposed Meeting Dates  
September 8, 2008 Meeting Minutes

## **Section 2:**

Fiscal Report  
FY09 Forecast 2560  
FY09 Forecast 2561  
Chart 1: 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Round Budget Reduction Summary  
Chart 2: 3<sup>rd</sup> Round Budget Reduction Summary  
Chart 3: FY10-FY11 Agency Budget Request  
Nursing Home Administrator Report  
Cemetery Superintendent Reports  
Veterans Service Program Report  
Guardianship Program Status Report

## **Section 3:**

Outreach Vehicle Update  
Unique Veterans Report  
VA Benefits at Crossroads  
Sympathy Card

## **Section 4:**

Legislative Issues  
Nevada Businesses/Service-Disabled Veterans

## **Section 5:**

Significant Communication  
Media Releases  
Other Information

## **Section 6:**

Report from VA Regional Office (Reno)  
Report from VA Medical Center (Salt Lake)  
Patient Newsletter

\*Items shown in grey will be distributed at VSC meeting.

## **Distribution List**

Governor Gibbons

Chair Assemblywoman McClain

Vice Chair Margaret Puccinelli

Senator Terry Care (Las Vegas)

Gina Crown

Scott Smith

Sean Fellows

Ron Gutzman

William Baumann

Michael Musgrove

Director

Deputy Director

Nursing Home Administrator (Las Vegas)

SNVMC Administrator (Las Vegas)

NNVMC Administrator (Fernley)

Agency Fiscal Officer

Las Vegas Community Copy (Las Vegas)

American Legion Department Commander

VFW Department Commander

DAV Department Commander





## Nevada Veterans Services Commission Agenda

**Grant Sawyer Building**  
**555 East Washington Ave. Rm 4401**  
**Las Vegas, NV 89101**

**Video Conferencing to:**  
Legislative Counsel Bureau  
401 S. Carson Street, Rm 3138  
Carson City, NV 89701

**December 5, 2008**  
**9:00 AM – 4:00 PM**

### Agenda topics

#### **Call to Order (Action)**

- Pledge of Allegiance
- Roll Call
- Introduction of Guests and Representatives
- Approval of December 5, 2008 Agenda
- Approval of September 30, 2008 Minutes

#### **Agency Reports (Possible Action)**

- Program and Facility Reports:
  - Fiscal Report
    - FY09 Status
    - FY 09 – FY 11 State Budget
    - Gift and Support Account Briefing
  - Nevada State Veterans Home
    - Boulder City
    - Northern Nevada
      - ✓ Green House® Project
      - ✓ VA Funding
      - ✓ Planning and Construction
  - Northern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery Report
  - Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery Report
  - Veterans Service Program
    - Guardianship Program
  - Strategic Planning Update

- Outreach Vehicle Update
- Unique Veterans Report
  - Women Veterans Conference
- VA Benefits At a Crossroads Discussion
- Veteran Legislation Report
  - Federal
  - State
  - Legislative Symposium
  - Nevada Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business Opportunity Act
- Late-Breaking issues and Reports
- Veteran Service Organization Reports

#### **Unfinished Business**

- Sympathy Card/VSC Commission
- Letter To Address Incarcerated Veterans VA Issues

#### **New Business**

- Selection and Location of Future Meeting Dates
  - Guest Speaker or Program Suggestions
- Underserved Veteran Population

#### **Public Comment**

- Comments from the Public
- Comments from Congressional Staff

#### **Adjournment (Action)**

**NOTE:** All presenters are asked to adhere to the 5-minute limitation of their presentation. This will allow for all speakers to present while the conference locations are still active.

**NOTE:** This is a tentative schedule for the meeting. The Commission reserves the right to take items in a different order to accomplish business in the most efficient manner with the exception of those so marked. Public comment will be limited to 3 minutes per individual.

**POSTING:** This agenda was posted at: Reno VAMC, Reno VARO, Northern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Southern Nevada Memorial Cemetery, Office of the Executive Director for Veterans Services, and Office of the Deputy Executive Director for Veterans Services.

**NOTICE:** Reasonable efforts will be made to assist and accommodate physically handicapped persons desiring to attend the meeting. Please call the Nevada Office of Veterans Services at (775) 688-1653 or (702) 636-3070 in advance if special arrangements are required.



## **Nevada Veterans Services Commission Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** September 30, 2008

**Grant Sawyer Building**

555 E. Washington Ave. Room# 4401

Las Vegas, NV 89101

### **Roll Call**

#### **Present:**

Assemblywoman Kathy McClain  
Senator Terry Care  
Margaret Puccinelli  
Scott Smith  
Bill Baumann  
Sean Fellows  
Gina Crown  
Mike Musgrove

#### **Absent:**

Ronald Gutzman

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

#### **Guest and representative introduction:**

Tim Tetz – Executive Director – Nevada Office of Veterans Services  
Carole Turner – Deputy Executive Director - Nevada Office of Veterans Services  
DeeDra Cornelius – Executive Assistant - Nevada Office of Veterans Services  
Gary Bermeosolo – Administrator – Nevada State Veterans Home  
Eric Pike – Administrator in Training – Nevada State Veterans Home  
Sherri Rice – Director – Access Healthcare Network  
Kenneth Braker - Vietnam Veterans of America – President of Nevada State Council  
William T. Anton – Deputy Adjutant – Disabled American Veterans  
Won Grubbs – Veterans of Foreign Wars  
Michael Dakduk – President – UNLV Student Veterans  
Debra Cole – Treasurer – UNLV Student Veterans

#### **Approval of this meeting's agenda:**

Terry Care – Made a motion to accept the agenda  
Mike Musgrove – Motion was seconded  
Decision: Unanimous consent

**Approval of May 14, 2008 minutes:**

Sean Fellows – Made a motion to accept the minutes

Terry Care – Motion was seconded

Decision: Unanimous consent

Changes Requested: None

**NOVS Agency Reports:****Fiscal Report:**

Report given by Tim Tetz and Joe Palmer - Nevada Office of Veterans Services

(All items and charts can be found in section 5 of the Commission book)

**Overview:**

1. A handout was given to the Commission explaining one million dollars will be reverting back to the state from the 2561 budget
2. Discussed the overspending on Commission travel for the 2560 budget account
3. Discussion of FY 10 & 11
  - a. There has been a request for 14% reductions
  - b. NOVS had to come up with \$600,000 which came out of budget account 2561; a substantial portion of the money came from Medicaid
4. Enhancements:
  - a. E900: The Administrative Service Officer II position was transferred back from the Home to the Reno NOVS office, Joseph Palmer has filled this position.
  - b. E262: Sparks Trinity Team
  - c. E252: Hire a trinity team for the new Home one year before it opens
  - d. E805: Upgrade the positions of two Administrative Assistants (AAs) at the cemeteries to AAlll
    1. Budget says there is no money for the upgrade
    2. Personnel says it should be done
    3. The employees will file a grievance if they are not granted the improvement to their positions
  - e. E250: Internal food services at NSVH
    1. Seventeen-member staff is currently contracted
    2. The Agency can save money by making it internal with a Dietician heading the entire dietary department
5. One-Shot Funding
  - a. New staff member
  - b. Two new workers at the cemeteries

- c. Expansion of the Fallon team
- d. Filling the positions of the Las Vegas team
- e. Washoe County Service Officer: item was removed from the County Commission agenda
- f. Facility Supervisor for NSVH-Sparks
- g. New IT Tech position
- h. Administrator for Social Services & Activity

### **Guardianship Program Status Report:**

Report given by Tim Tetz – NOVS Executive Director

(All items and charts can be found in section 2 of the Commission book)

#### **Overview:**

- 1. 25% of the Executive Director's time has been dedicated to the guardianship program in the last month
- 2. The process of removing the wards from the program is quite slow
- 3. The program has faced many issues during the process of removal and is now running into problems with the Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS)

### **Nevada State Veterans Home (NSVH) Administrator Report:**

Report given by Gary Bermeosolo – Nevada State Veterans Home

Administrator

(All items and charts can be found in section 2 of the Commission book)

#### **Overview:**

- 1. 39 women currently in the Nevada State Veterans Home
- 2. The Home is currently running at 98% occupancy
- 3. Discharge breakdowns were added to the standard report for the Home by request of the Commission
- 4. The Nevada State Veterans Home sends a sympathy card to the families of its veterans who have passed away:
  - a. The Commission requested to be included in expressing their sympathy when this happens
  - b. A letter requesting information on the legalities of this request will be sent to the Attorney General's office
  - c. This item will be open for discussion at the next meeting
- 5. The Commission was given an update on the last survey done at the Nevada State Veterans Home
- 6. The Home is integrating a new billing software program which will include touch screens
- 7. NSVH sent some of their nursing staff to Phoenix to see the cultural change in the Green House Project
  - a. Some differences noticed were the nurse calling system and nursing stations have been removed
- 8. The Quality Assurance and Compliance Department were combined into one position; it has become an RN IV position

9. Construction of the dining room expansion is still under way
  - a. Construction is a bit behind schedule
  - b. Facing challenges with the budget
  - c. There are some issues obtaining steel
  - d. Residents were given the opportunity to choose décor for their dining room
  - e. The Home would like to serve its first meal in the new dining room before Thanksgiving
  - f. The open house is scheduled for October 22, 2008
10. Discussed employee vacancy rate at NSVH
  - a. Most is at the CNA level
  - b. Foodservice also has a vacancy rate. This is a contracted service.
11. Discussed nursing training and opportunities for the Home
  - a. NSVH has been trying to work with UNLV; however, they have not shown much interest.
  - b. NSVH has a program with CSN in Boulder City
  - c. Discussed the possibility of looking into high schools for programs to promote CNAs
12. All eighteen showers which had prior mold issues have now been repaired
13. Eric Pike was introduced as the Assistant Administrator for NSVH
14. NSVH is returning more money than the Agency receives from the State of Nevada
  - a. Beginning in FY08 the money which would normally be returned will be retained by the Agency
  - b. The money retained must be used for the care of other veterans
  - c. The Agency plans to use the money retained to pay for the bond on the new Nevada State Veterans Home in Sparks, NV

### **Northern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery (NNVMC) Report:**

Report given by Tim Tetz – NOVS Executive Director

(All items and charts can be found in section 2 of the Commission book)

#### **Overview:**

1. An update on increased burial rates was provided
2. More burial room is needed; plan to widen to the east of the cemetery
3. The installation of nine flag poles at NNVMC was completed
4. Lights have been installed at the cemetery
5. The kiosk has been installed at the cemetery
6. The "Green Machine" which came from Boulder City was received at NNVMC and thank-you letters have been sent out

7. Announced there are currently no new employees or new projects happening
8. The paving of the parking lot is done around this time of the year and will come out of statewide CIP funding

### **Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery (SNVMC) Report:**

Report given by Sean Fellows – Cemetery Committee Member

(All items and charts can be found in section 2 of the Commission book)

#### **Overview:**

1. A letter was drafted to the editors of the Southern Nevada newspapers, which will be signed by the Cemetery Committee members, in an effort to remove the \$10 fee for the addition of the American Flag to the obituaries of veterans
2. An update on burial plot amounts was provided
3. The road outside of the cemetery has been widened
4. The roads inside the cemetery were recently paved
5. The cemetery would like to keep the Portable On Demand Storage (PODS) but move them elsewhere
6. The fencing around the cemetery will be replaced-gates included

### **Veterans Services Program Report:**

Report given by Carole Turner for Jeanette Rae – Veterans Services Program Manager

(All items and charts can be found in section 2 of the Commission book)

#### **Overview:**

1. The Elko office is open and has been very busy helping veterans
2. Announced Kelly Awtrey resigned in April and Kristian Egtvedt was hired to fill the position
3. All new Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) have passed accreditation training and can now do claims
4. Discussed the new Federal law in effect regarding frivolous claims and how it will affect the Agency and its clients
  - a. The law could cause VSOs to lose their accreditation if they file a frivolous claim; however, if another agency submits the same claim and the claim is approved the veteran(s) could try to sue NOVS for back pay
  - b. A Notice of Limits for Representation is now being used within the Agency to help cover NOVS employees/VSOs

**Executive Director Report:**

Report given by Tim Tetz – Executive Director

(All items and charts can be found in section 2 of the Commission book)

**Overview:**

1. Announced approval of Green House concept in Nevada; 1<sup>st</sup> Green House Veterans Home in the nation
2. Handed out updated information regarding the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA)
3. Bill Draft Requests (BDR) NOVS is currently tracking related to veterans
  - a. BDR 13: Senator Coffin – Provides for a bonus to be paid to certain members of the Nevada National Guard and the Reserves called to active duty to combat terrorism
  - b. BDR 123: Assemblywoman McClain – Makes various changes concerning small business start-ups for veterans and senior citizens
  - c. BDR 124: Assemblywoman McClain – Authorizes the Office of Veterans Services to receive ownership of certain artifacts and memorabilia concerning veterans
  - d. BDR 34-186: Senator Nolan – Enacts the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children
  - e. BDR 37-197: Assemblyman Manendo – Requires the landscaping at veterans cemeteries in Nevada to be natural turf
  - f. BDR 34-198: Senator Heck: Provides for tuition and fee waivers within the Nevada System of higher education for certain veterans and their dependents
  - g. BDR 43-199: Senator Heck: Creates a Gold Star license plate for eligible family members of a service member killed in action
  - h. BDR 24-324: Office of Veterans Services – Revises provisions governing voter registration and voting procedures for members of the Armed Forces and their families who reside outside the United States
  - i. BDR 37-325: Office of Veterans Services – Provides a uniform definition of “veteran” for purposes of NRS
  - j. BDR 43-535: Senator Beers – Requires waiver of the fee for renewal of special license plates for certain retired veterans
  - k. BDR 32-572: Assemblyman Settlemyer – Allows a person to claim an exemption for themselves and as a surviving spouse under both the tax exemption for veterans and the tax exemption for disabled veterans if each spouse qualified for one of the exemptions



4. Bill Draft Requests (BDR) NOVS is currently tracking which are possibly related to veterans
  - a. BDR 43-364: Commission on Special License Plates (NRS 482.367.004) – Allows certain special license plates to be produced and issued for use on motorcycles
  - b. BDR 15-443: Office of the Governor – Prohibits certain demonstrations at a funeral, memorial service, or ceremony
  - c. BDR 32-451: Senator McGinness – Makes various changes relating to the assessment of property taxes
5. Discussed the Purple Heart and Disabled Veterans license plates
6. Discussed preference or set-aside opportunities for veteran owned businesses or service-disabled veteran owned businesses
7. Discussed Commission's role in NOVS strategic goals
8. Discussed the Commission and commissioners mission to serve the veterans of Nevada. An overview of the approach, parameters, responsibilities and procedures taken by other states veterans commissions were presented by Gary Bermeosolo.

From this discussion, the commissioners decided to undertake the task of submitting an annual Agency letter to the Governor outlining status, achievements, goals, veteran and senior issues, and legislative proposals.

  - a. A subcommittee was appointed by Chairwoman McClain to draft the letters
    1. Scott Smith
    2. Margaret Puccinelli
    3. Mike Musgrove
9. Discussed CIP Requests
  - a. 9050: Cemetery Expansion
  - b. 9051: Northern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery Gravesite Expansion (dropped)
  - c. 9052: Northern Nevada State Veterans Home
  - d. 9078: Cooling Tower Replacement
10. Discussed and previewed the existing plans for the Green House model as it was drawn up for the mental health facility site
11. Updated the Commission on the MilBlog conference attended by the Executive Director
12. Gave an update regarding the Global War on Terror (GWOT) conference held by Lieutenant Governor Krolicki
13. Discussed funding for the outreach vehicle
  - a. NOVS would like to have the outreach vehicle in time for Veteran's Day at Legislature

- b. The vehicle will be used to reach veterans in every county at least one to two times per year
  - c. A portion of the license plate fund will be provided to pay for the vehicle
  - d. The vehicle will cost \$45,000 but once it is completed and ready to help veterans it will cost about \$80,000
  - e. A request was made for support by the Commission to approve the amount of money to be spent on the project
14. Gave information regarding "Acupuncture without Borders" which will be held in Carson City, NV on Veteran's Day

### **Deputy Executive Director Report:**

Report given by Carole Turner – Deputy Executive Director

(All items and charts can be found in section 2 of the Commission book)

### **Overview:**

- 1. Discussed three special projects
  - a. Lowden Museum
    - 1. Successfully emptied out remaining items
    - 2. Transferred items into storage for safekeeping
    - 3. Storage is environmentally controlled
    - 4. Some items such as uniforms and military gunnery were missing, which were on a list given to NOVS
  - b. UNLV Student Veterans Organization
    - 1. Introduced Michael Dakduk – President
    - 2. Introduced Debra Cole – Treasurer
    - 3. Currently pursuing a relationship which will allow veteran outreach at the college campus
    - 4. Expected to reach 500+ veterans
    - 5. The program will help to transition veterans when they leave the military and decide to go back to school
    - 6. Commissioner Smith was thanked for supporting this project
  - c. Women Veterans
    - 1. Announced Sharon Wagner has resigned as the Women Veterans Coordinator (WVC) due to medical reasons
    - 2. Both WVC positions are now vacant; however, the Women Veterans program will continue to move forward
    - 3. Contracted marketing will help with WVC outreach as well as other veteran outreach
    - 4. Will be honoring Women Veterans by era on the NOVS website on a rotational basis

5. Currently have 300 women on the Women Veterans distribution list

### **Veterans Service Commission Support:**

#### **Letter to the Governor Regarding the Nevada State Veterans Home – Sparks**

##### **Overview:**

1. Some changes were made to the document by the Commission and Chairwoman McClain requested a motion to approve the document as rewritten

Mike Musgrove – Made a motion to accept the document as rewritten

Margaret Puccinelli – Motion was seconded

Decision: Unanimous consent to send the document as rewritten and signed by each Commission member

#### **Support from the Veterans Service Commission approving the amount of funds for the NOVS outreach vehicle**

##### **Overview:**

1. The Commission discussed possible options for funding and Chairwoman McClain requested a motion to approve the amount of money to be spent on the project

Bill Baumann – Made a motion to approve the funds

Gina Crown – Motion was seconded

Decision: Unanimous consent to approve using the amount of funds needed for the NOVS outreach vehicle

### **Public Comment:**

#### **Sherri Rice – Director of Access to Healthcare Network**

##### **Overview:**

1. Access to Healthcare Network (AHN) is a local nonprofit organization
2. The Access to Healthcare Network program allows uninsured people who qualify to receive treatment at much lower rates
3. For information regarding medical care, AHN can be reached at 775-770-6035
4. AHN also has a program which offers discounted dental and vision rates to anyone who doesn't have it available to them, including veterans

5. For information regarding dental and vision care, AHN can be reached at 1-877-570-2797

**Kenneth Braker – Vietnam Veterans of America – President of Nevada State Council**

**Overview:**

1. Discussed incarcerated veterans and issues
  - a. Says the prison system isn't addressing the needs of veterans
  - b. Some prisons are hard to get into to help veterans because of lock-down issues
  - c. Can't get copies of DD-214 discharge paperwork for some incarcerated veterans
  - d. NOVS offered to work with the prison Director to help veterans where needed

**Other Reports:**

**Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Update**

Report given by Bill Baumann

**Overview:**

1. Announced Bill Baumann will be the Sergeant at Arms for the DAV next year
2. Now taking vehicle donations; this program launched a year ago to help fund VA transportation program
3. Gave an update on the wheelchair program
4. Gave an update on volunteer hours; volunteers are dropping with the current economy issues
5. Will be replacing the van out of Elko which goes to Salt Lake City next year
6. Announced the Homeless Stand Down on October 8, 2008 in Clark County

## **Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Update**

Report given by Mike Musgrove

### **Overview:**

1. Gave update of VFW at the GWOT conference

## **Open Commission Discussion**

### **Overview:**

1. The Commission would like to see standard reports go out to them earlier than the day of the Commission meeting as read-ahead material

## **Future Meetings**

### **Upcoming Commission Meetings**

1. **Veteran Service Commission**  
**March 3, 2009 – Carson City, NV**  
Previously decided upon by the Commission
2. **Veteran Legislative Rally Day**  
**March 4, 2009 – Carson City, NV**  
Previously decided upon by the Commission

## **Adjournment**

Chairwoman McClain – Adjourned the meeting

**NEVADA STATE VETERANS HOME – BOULDER CITY**  
**Veterans Services Commission Report**  
**December 5, 2008**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Thank you, Madame Chairman, members of the Commission, fellow veterans, and guests, for the opportunity to share information with you concerning your Nevada State Veterans Home in Boulder City.

Our current Nevada State Veterans Home resident population breaks down as follows:

WW II Vets – 96	Army – 70
Korean Vets – 49	Navy – 32
Vietnam Vets – 29	Marines – 12
Persian Gulf – 1	Air Force – 26
Peace Time – 6	Coast Guard – 6
Women Veterans – 10	Boulder City – 10%
Women Non-Veterans – 27	Henderson – 22%
Ex POWs – 0	Las Vegas – 65%
Average Age – 82	Other – 3%

At the end of the first quarter, the Home's resident census was 169, leaving us 11 beds available and an occupancy rate of 94%. During the last quarter, we dispersed 219 admission applications, admitted 37 residents, and discharged a total of 37 residents, as follows:

Discharges to Hospitals - 25  
Discharges due to Death - 12  
Discharges to Home - 0  
Other Discharges - 0

You may recall we undergo two surveys each year – a VA survey in the spring, and the State Board of Licensure and Certification (BLC) survey, in the fall. We just completed our fall survey with BLC last Friday and are waiting for the official results to be forwarded to us. During last year's fall survey, we achieved positive results, which we hope we have achieved again this year.

In August, the Nevada State Veterans Home marked its 6<sup>th</sup> year of "Caring for America's Heroes." However, due to our central dining room expansion, we weren't able to celebrate until October 22nd, when we invited the Boulder City community to join us as we commemorated our 6<sup>th</sup> year. This year, we again partnered with the Boulder City Chamber of Commerce to host our annual Open House. We had the largest crowd yet, with well over 100 visitors. This gave us an opportunity to provide tours and an overview of our services to the Boulder City community. In the weeks following this event, we received positive feedback from the community, as did the Chamber. We all agreed to continue to partner with each other for future Open Houses.

Holidays at the Home are always busy, with numerous opportunities for residents and families to join in the Holiday cheer. We offer Home-sponsored Holiday parties on each of our three neighborhoods, complete with a visit from Mr. and Mrs. Clause, and our residents are also the recipients of numerous veterans service organizations offers to sponsor other Holiday gatherings, pizza parties, and caroling. Every resident receives a gift, thanks to the community's generosity – making it truly the most wonderful time of the year!

## **OVERVIEW**

- We continue to achieve good results on our customer satisfaction surveys, generated through our partnership with Pinnacle Consulting, and we continue to move forward with our resident preference surveys, conducted by Social Services and Activities.
- Our effort to fully integrate our clinical and billing software continues, with ongoing training and transitioning to the new software. The process is moving along according to schedule and our goal is to have final transition completed by January 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Construction of the central dining room expansion is almost complete, with items on the "punch list" being addressed. As soon as we receive our occupancy certificate from the BLC, we can begin utilizing our new dining room. Residents are very excited and have spent a lot of time selecting furnishings for their new space.
- We are continuing preparations to remodel the Mariner Cove. This area is where we care for residents who are inflicted with dementia-related illnesses. This "facelift" will enable us to provide a more home-like environment, while addressing environmental challenges specific to caring for this resident population.
- The Home and its residents continue to receiving positive press, with two articles for Veterans Day, highlighting residents of the Home, and several Senior Focus articles also providing an opportunity to highlight the Home.
- In February, I will attend the annual National Association of State Veterans Homes Winter Conference, in Washington, D.C. Not only will I have the opportunity to gain innovative ideas from industry professionals and my counterparts at other state veterans' homes, but I will also take a few hours to visit with Nevada's Congressional Delegation, giving me the opportunity to bring them up-to-date with NSVH's successes and challenges and to facilitate their assistance with future veteran's legislation.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Madame Chairman and Members of the Commission, for your further information, I have included in your packet an update from the various disciplines at the Home. Your NSVH Team is honored to be "Caring for America's Heroes" and we especially appreciate the support of this Commission, our veterans' organizations, and elected officials. Madame Chairman, I would be happy to answer questions at this time.

**(For your interest, attached are updates provided by various NSVH disciplines.)**

## **ACTIVITIES**

October was a busy month for our Veterans. The Annual Veterans Olympics were held at the Home and Veterans Memorial Park. All residents received medals for their participation, with the first, second, and third place winners all received Gold, Silver, or Bronze medals. The Olympics ended with a BBQ, which was enjoyed by all.

October provided a great opportunity to visit our friends, the Big Horn Sheep, at Henmenway Park. On Halloween, the Boys and Girls Club of Henderson joined us in the morning and the Blue Star Mothers sponsored a party in the afternoon, providing enough "trick or treat" fun for all.

We are looking forward to Thanksgiving, as well as well all our regular monthly community outings - Monday shopping, Tuesday evening Dinners, Thursday Breakfast Clubs, Friday lunches. The community, including the Las Vegas Club, Hacienda, and Rail Road Pass, all remain supportive of our residents and make many of these outings possible.

## **ADMISSIONS**

The Admissions Department has been busy, again this quarter due to a higher-than-average resident discharge rate, continued interest in the Home, and the readmission of residents sent out for acute care at the area hospitals. Applications are steadily coming in for review and approval by the Admissions Review Board. We do have a waiting list that we are working off of. We continue to try and streamline our review process to speed up admissions. The biggest obstacle in this process continues to be a pay source after Medicare benefits run out and conveying this to potential residents' families.

During the first quarter of this fiscal year, NSVH processed 37 admissions and 37 discharges. Appointments continue to be encouraged with all interested parties in order to give appropriate time and assistance. Daily phone calls continue to average 75. Tours and drop-ins average 20 per week.

## **BUSINESS OFFICE**

The Business Office continues to respond to requests for information from the Executive Budget Office to support and/or reduce NSVH's FY09 spending authority, as well as the next biennial budget. The annual Medicare and Medicaid cost reports are nearing completion and will be submitted by the end of November. We are still in the middle of converting our accounting software to the new ADL system. We have delayed the "go live date", which is to be determined at this time. The Business Office continues to function effectively and is always looking for ways to streamline operations and become more efficient.



## **CHAPLAINCY**

During the first quarter, our Chapel Program continued to see growth in the number of residents who attend spiritual services regularly, as well as the number of loved ones who join them. The Sunday Chapel service offered in our memory care Neighborhood, affording residents with dementia and Alzheimer's the opportunity to participate in Sunday Services, has been received well by residents, their families, and team members. The Sunday Morning Worship Service and Evening Vespers remain steady, with an average combined attendance now at 60. Bible Study every Tuesday afternoon now averages fifteen residents.

The Chaplain continues to make weekly visits to local hospitals that have admitted our residents for acute-care. Daily spiritual counseling for residents and staff continues to ensure attention to morale and welfare remains a priority.

## **COMPLIANCE**

There have been some changes to the Compliance Department. As of September, a new Department was developed combining the Compliance Office with the Performance Improvement Office. The merger was made to allow better utilization of services. Along with the merger, a new Performance Improvement/Staff Educator was hired and started Sept 8, 2008. The following projects were addressed over the first quarter:

- The review process was begun for the introduction of an online educational service to assist with mandatory in-services. Two services are being reviewed at this time—McKesson and Silverchair.
- The performance improvement officer/staff educator became certified in Sept as a MDS co-coordinator.
- We began a project to improve our quality compliance reporting. A system known as EQUIP is being reviewed to assist in this process.
- Our department will be instituting a project called LEAP. Several team members are to attend training in the spring of 2009. This project will continue to move us forward in the cultural changes now taking place.

## **DINING SERVICES**

Dining Services has been busy preparing for the opening of the new dining room. Along with Social Services, we assisted residents in choosing flatware, plates, and glasses for the new space. We have also been involved in weekly construction meetings and installation of equipment for the dining room. Our 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Open House was a smashing success. The menu consisted of a carving station of beef tenderloin, shrimp kabobs, crab canapés with mango salsa, shrimp cocktail "shots", and a variety of individual pizzas. Dessert featured a chocolate fountain with fresh strawberries and white chocolate chip cookies for dipping. We are anticipating a very busy Holiday Season, with numerous catered parties for residents, staff, and family members.

## **FACILITIES**

A separate area within the Laundry Room is being retrofitted for an Ecolab Chemical Closet. This means chemicals being stored behind the washing machines will be now be in a secured closet.

NSVH hosted its 7<sup>th</sup> Eagle Scout project involving our desert tortoise habitat. The tortoise's burrows were rebuilt, a new watering station was added, and two signs giving information on the desert tortoise were added. In the near future, we will have landscaping done so the tortoises will also have new sources of native cactus, plant material, and shade.

The remodeling of the shower in Mariner Cove has been completed. They had to take out the old concrete and put in a shower pan. They also put in galvanized 16 gauge metal to reinforce the wall behind the shower. New tile flooring and a heating unit were installed.

The Falconer Staff restrooms received a new ceramic tile floor. So far we have upgraded three public restrooms across from three Nursing Units. They are upgraded with new ceramic tile and paint giving them a brighter and becoming look. There are only two restrooms left for the completion of all staff and public restrooms.

## **HEALTH INFORMATION SERVICES**

During the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the fiscal year, Health Information Services processed 36 admissions and 37 discharges.

In July, we began the process of moving the data from our current electronic records system to our new integrated electronic medical records system, ADL. Training was held for key people throughout August and September. The switch to the new system will take place in segments, but our goal is to be out of the current Accu-med program by the end of December.

Medical records will focus on entering all the orders for each resident, which will take some time.

The Medical Staff continues to grow. We have two family practice physicians, four internal medicine physicians, two psychiatrists, one psychologist, three podiatrists, one cardiologist, one wound care physician, one dentist, 4 hospice physicians, and 5 mid-level providers who are all kept very busy.

Health Information Services Staff continues to remain the same as last quarter.

## **HOUSEKEEPING AND LAUNDRY**

Housekeeping and laundry continue to run smoothly. Laundry is still averaging about 50,000 pounds of laundry per month. Laundry has eliminated the need for "special wash." We have put in an extra rinse cycle and are doing weekly pH testing to keep the linen within the proper levels. Nurses and CNAs no longer need to take time away

from their residents to come and get linens that haven't been laundered in the industrial machines. In the recent past, laundry would wash a certain amount of linens in the "household" washer with a different detergent than the industrial washers, such as Tide. We would then store those "special" linens on a cart and the nursing personnel would come to laundry and collect what they needed. Now, they no longer need to do this.

### **INFECTION CONTROL**

Towards the end of the first quarter, NSVH flu shot administration was 100% complete on Sidewinder, 80% complete on Falconer, and 70% complete on Mariner. Mariner tends to take longer because of the need to get consent from responsible parties outside of the Home due to the nature of the medical conditions of these residents. If a team member did not elect to get a flu shot, the Infection Control Officer will present them with a declination form to sign. Tom has been busy working towards his Department goals. Now that the Wound Care program is fully staffed with two LPNs, Wound Care services are offered seven days per week. The two LPNs are taking a team approach to the scheduling and they are looking into ways to expand their services throughout the Home. They have instituted a head-to-toe inspection for all new admissions to help keep determinations consistent. Infection Control is looking forward to implementing electronic tracking of wound care and is happy to report the HepB vaccination program is now up-to-date, bring the OSHA citation to a final close.

### **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

We are working with TheFirm in Las Vegas to update our Women Veterans Website and we are also reviewing a proposal from a vendor in Reno to update our entire website. Additionally, the following actions have been of focus:

- Reno – Installation of a new PBX in Reno will be on November 20, 2008. Video conferencing hardware is functional and TV is mounted on the wall. We need to return the video conferencing cart to state inventory.
- Las Vegas – Onsite support project for this location is complete. Further visits will not be scheduled as regularly.
- Boulder City Cemetery – Equipment turnover is at a standstill due to budget issue causing purchase requests to be rejected. Installation of a VPN appliance is underway.
- Fernley Cemetery – Installing VPN appliance so staff can skip the VPN client they've been using.
- Boulder City Veterans Home – Multimedia installation in the new dining room is just about complete and we have started the chapel video project which will provide us with an in-house TV channel to be broadcast on channel four.
- Elko – Installation of a new PBX in Elko is slated for December 03, 2008
- Fallon, Alpine, and the VA Hospital in Reno - Finding hardware to be used at Fallon and Alpine for VA connectivity.

## **NURSING**

The nursing team has had some changes in key RN charge nurse positions over this past quarter. We have successfully recruited one of our most reliable contract agency nurses to fill a vacant day Mariner position and have advanced one of our Mariner LPNs to a charge nurse position on the evening shift on Sidewinder. This was upon her successful completion of obtaining her RN license. Our MDS team graciously facilitated the transition of one of our RNs to the Performance Improvement/Staff Education role and we are orienting a very experienced MDS nurse into that vacant position. We are still interviewing for LPN and CNA positions, and this seems to be an ongoing task, as our staff go on to pursue different endeavors.

We have finally gotten through the State process to allow us to proceed with establishing the lead CNA position. We have interviewed from within our group of mentors and now have 7 of our 8 lead CNAs starting into that new position. This offers the CNA group a career ladder, so that those of our folks who want to stay in that position throughout their health care career have the opportunity for advancement. Our administrator worked on this project for close to 3 years. It was worth the effort!

I had the opportunity to attend the summer conference of the National Association of State Veterans Homes in Florida during August. I returned with a renewed interest in some of the devices which offer sensory comfort to the dementia resident. Gary and I also met with vendors who had furnishings and equipment that might be considered as we complete the renovations of our dining rooms.

I shared a DVD with the nursing team at our last monthly meeting to generate some new ideas regarding culture change toward a more resident centered approach to care. This is an ongoing project of our administrative team.

## **PERSONNEL**

At the end of the quarter, of the Home's 186 positions, there were eight CNA, two LPN II, and one RN IV vacancy. Additionally, during this quarter, the State of Nevada's hiring freeze is still implemented and all positions require approval from the Agency Executive Director.

The Personnel Department processed the following personnel actions during this quarter:

- Processed 10 New Hires
- Processed 1 Promotions
- Process 1 Auto Progression
- Processed 2 Reinstatements
- Processed 14 Terminations
- Conducted 3 New Employee Orientations
- Conducted 3 NEATS Timekeeping Training Sessions
- Processed 1 Retirement Plan Change
- Processed 1 Special Salary Adjustment

In addition, Personnel assisted in the following Personnel actions:

- Processed and submitted a NPD-19 for the existing Quality Assurance Specialist to a RN IV position
- Continued to advertise for nursing positions in newspapers, magazines, and online
- Generated quarterly reports for the Department of Personnel and Agency Performance Improvement Specialist
- Completed Agency monthly statistical reports
- Processed paperwork related to 4 work injuries
- Processed monthly evaluation and employee reports
- Created the quarterly "Personnel Happenings" page for the Veterans Spirit newsletter
- Attended Department of Personnel Liaison meeting
- Working with Department of Personnel to organize on-site Sexual Harassment – Revisited training
- Continued to work with Department of Personnel to finalize Diversity Training details
- Participated in the Agency's Facility Enhancement Committee as the Facilitator

### **REHABILITATION**

Our staff physical therapist, Eric Pike passed his nursing home administrator exam and is now the assistant administrator in our facility. He still continues to work in the physical therapy department spending 49% of his time with patient care. He is also in the Certified Public Management Las Vegas Class 6. For Jul-Sep, the department saw an average of:

- Residents seen: PT = 31; OT = 36; ST = 30
- Medicare A: PT = 12; OT = 15; ST = 10
- Medicare B: PT = 19; OT = 18; ST = 17
- Managed Care: PT = 0; OT = 3; ST = 3
- Total treatment minutes generated: PT = 5,140; OT = 9,960; ST = 8,125

### **SOCIAL SERVICES**

The Social Services Department is continuing to survey our residents and/or their family members to measure their quality of life at NSVH. This quality of life survey is in conjunction with the National Association of State Veterans Homes with Iowa State Veterans Home spearheading this project. The goal is to establish a nationwide data base for state veterans' homes to measure resident satisfaction and to allow homes to compare themselves to each other.

The Social Services Supervisor, along with our Activities Supervisor, have plans to implement a personal preference care-plan to be utilized as part of our continued work towards cultural change within our Facility. Plans for implementation will begin after our new ADL MDS system is fully integrated. This personal care-plan will make available personal preferences of the resident to all staff members furthering the communication between team members and those we serve on a daily basis with the goal of a more home-like environment.

The Social Services Supervisor, along with the Nurse Manager of our Mariner Neighborhood, are continuing to work towards converting the isolation room on the Mariner Neighborhood into a multi-use room. Approval was obtained through the Nevada Veterans Assistance League to receive funds for refurbishing/decorating our isolation room to make it look more homelike. Two recliners and an upholstered chair have already been ordered. Once delivered, we will proceed with ordering other items to make the room look more like a studio apartment. This will benefit the dying resident and their family members and/or to allow the family member and their loved one to have a private gathering place.

The Social Services Department continues to facilitate important meetings for our residents, including the Resident Council, Resident Food Council, and Welcome to the Neighborhood meetings on a monthly basis, and also the Family Council Meetings on a quarterly basis. Last quarter, Jim Barrett, Director of Food and Nutrition and Andrea Grondwalski, Registered Dietitian for Morison's/HDS Services presented information to families regarding the challenges in providing food service in a skilled nursing environment and also updates and plans for our new dining room project. These meetings provide for the exchange of ideas and information between management and residents, as well as a way to disseminate information to residents, management, and family members.

### **VOLUNTEERS**

The Volunteer Coordinator has been extremely busy this last quarter, overseeing the work of 77 active volunteers whose to-date volunteer hours total 6,731. Last year at this time, there were 86 volunteers with 12,516 hours. We've had a number of illnesses/deaths in the volunteer department, which shows in the number and hours of volunteers for this quarter. The average age of our volunteers is 70. We have also lost some due to volunteers moving or relocating out of state and the increase in gas prices. Recruiting for new volunteers continues, through the posting of flyers around Boulder City and Henderson, and the mailing of volunteer brochures to area churches and recreation centers. We also ask current volunteers to assist us in recruiting. Additionally, the Volunteer Coordinator continues making presentations at local veteran and civic organizations, requesting donations of time, talent, goods, services, and funding to benefit residents of the Home.

JIM GIBBONS  
*Governor*



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Reno, Nevada 89511  
(775) 688-1653 • Fax (775) 688-1656

Office of Veterans Services  
950 W. Owens, Rm. 111  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89106  
(702) 636-3070 • Fax (702) 486-5268

Southern Nevada Veterans  
Memorial Cemetery  
1900 Buchanan Boulevard  
Boulder City, Nevada 89005  
(702) 486-5920 • Fax (702) 486-5923

STATE OF NEVADA  
**NORTHERN NEVADA VETERANS  
MEMORIAL CEMETERY**  
P.O. BOX 1919  
FERNLEY, NEVADA 89408  
(775) 575-4441 • Fax (775) 575-5713

Nevada State Veterans Home  
100 Veterans Memorial Drive  
Boulder City, Nevada 89005  
(702) 332-6864 • Fax (702) 332-6762

Nevada Veterans Services Commission Report  
Submitted by Wes Block  
December 5, 2008

We are entering the winter season with the cemetery in excellent condition. As of October 1<sup>st</sup>, the irrigation system had been shut down. As funds allow, we will now work on buildings/grounds, equipment repairs and upgrades for the burial needs of veterans and their families. Below are listed a few projects in the works for the cemetery.

2009 Expansion: We are in the final planning stages of a 4+ acre project that will provide 900 single burial sites with additional paved access. The expansion will be located just east of the pavilion/committal area.

Flagpole Project: The Northern Nevada Coalition of Veterans expects to complete this project in the near future. To date, donations of over \$40,000 have been used for this enhancement. Within the next few months, lighting for the flagpoles will be installed from the \$15,000 recently donated for this purpose and actions are currently underway to fundraise for an additional \$15,000. Three of the new poles will have lighting 24-7. On special occasions, the entire set with all service flags will have illumination.

Previously, we have been placing flags on these poles and using portable lighting only during special events/holidays. On the last Veterans Day the flags were flown Monday through Wednesday. Once the flagpole project is completed, we will discontinue the use of the smaller flagpoles.

Pavilion Area: State Public Works Board has redesigned a section of the pavilion area providing new concrete walks and handicapped access to meet the latest ADA standards. The paving repairs planned for completion this summer by SPWB Paving have not started. We have some serious pavement erosion problems that can only worsen; hopefully they still have us on their project list.

Wreaths Across America: Colonel Mike Scott of the Civil Air Patrol has been coordinating the preparations for this ceremony on December 13<sup>th</sup>. We have provided support in whatever way needed to help make this a memorable event.

The Northern Cemetery team wishes to thank the members of the Commission for your support in helping us meet our commitment of excellence in service to our Nation's Veterans.

Thank you.

# NORTHERN NEVADA VETERANS MEMORIAL CEMETERY

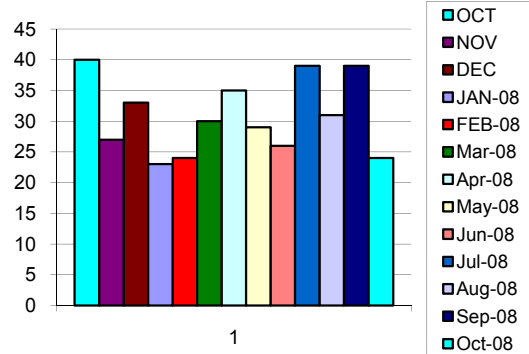
Burials as of end of Oct '08

Interments	Casket		Cremation		Totals
	Single	Double	Plot	Niche	
Veterans	0	5	3	12	20
Dependent	1	1	2	0	4
<b>Monthly Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Disinterment</b>					
Veterans	0	0	0	1	1
Dependent	0	0	0	0	0
<b>CY Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>301</b>
<b>FY - Veterans</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>- Dependents</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>FY Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>132</b>

Total to Date (Since April,1990 to present)

	Casket	Cremation	Totals
Veterans	1613	3032	4645
Dependent	407	512	919
<b>Combined Total to Date</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>3544</b>	<b>5564</b>
<b>Total Disinterments to Date</b>			<b>0</b>
<b>Completed Re-open</b>	Doubles 1	Plots 1	Niches 1
			<b>3</b>

Plot Availability	Vacancy
Single Caskets	5
Double Caskets	1420
Plots	38
Niches	1980
<b>Total Plots Available</b>	<b>3443</b>







## **Northern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** July 17, 2008

**Northern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery**  
**14 Veterans Way**  
**Fernley, NV 89408**

**Call to Order**      Chairman Stan Jones

**Prayer**

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Roll Call**

**Present:**      Stan Jones  
Jerry Finley  
Tom Grady  
Gina Crown  
Chuck Harton

**Absent:**      Mike McGinness  
Skip Cox

**Guests:**      Tim Tetz –Nevada Office of Veterans Services  
Wes Block –Northern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery  
DeeDra Cornelius – Nevada Office of Veterans Services  
Jan Finley – Wife of Jerry Finley  
Jim Tuxson – Owner/Operator T&T Electric  
Bob Wallace – Korean War Veterans

### **Approval of this meeting's agenda:**

Tom Grady – Made a motion to accept the agenda  
Jerry Finley – Motion seconded  
Decision: Unanimous consent  
Changes Requested: None

### **Approval of the April 30, 2008 minutes:**

Jerry Finley – Made a motion to accept the minutes  
Tom Grady – Motion seconded  
Decision: Unanimous consent  
Changes Requested: None

## **Unfinished Business:**

### **Korean War Memorial Update**

Bob Wallace – Korean War Veterans Association

#### **Overview:**

1. Twenty bricks have been sold for the memorial
2. The bricks are to be laid in the center of the memorial
3. One bench available to be placed at the memorial, others will follow
4. They would like a big plaque on 1/8" aluminum with silk screened information; will bring it in for board approval if they can get one made
5. It was estimated to be about a year before wall construction will begin

### **Northern Nevada Veterans Coalition:**

Jerry Finley – Northern Nevada Veterans Coalition

#### **Overview:**

1. It was proposed by the Cemetery Committee Chairman a plaque be placed out front with the names of Brett Palmer and Jerry Finley to be added for their help and commitment to the cemetery through the Northern Nevada Veterans Coalition
2. Discussed the possibility of a flag retirement pit for ceremonies to take place, such as Flag Day, which would be open to the public or anyone with a flag to retire

## **Cemetery and Agency Reports:**

### **Northern Nevada Veterans memorial Cemetery Report:**

Wes Block – Superintendent – Northern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery

#### **Overview:**

1. Received many good comments on the tents placed for the Memorial Day ceremony
2. Discussed the statistics of burials within the cemetery; a hand out report was given to the board members
3. Discussed Public Works Board projects
  - a. Repair of uneven cement
  - b. Waiting to hear when the paving will begin

4. Discussed the tree program
  - a. Working on attaining plaques
  - b. Discussed how often the plaques for the tree program should be replaced
    - i. It was decided the replacement should be left up to the donor of the tree unless it gets worn out and nothing is done with it, in which case the cemetery will give the donating families the option to relinquish the tree if they do not have the money to replace the plaques
5. The pad pouring program has given people more cause to donate for benches to be placed within the cemetery
6. Announced the Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery received the "Green Machine" on July 17, 2008 with the help of the National Guard
7. Discussed the Garden Club projects
  - a. The club is keeping busy with trimming and other maintenance
  - b. The club has planted about 70 roses so far
8. The moving of gravesites for the walkway was discussed
  - a. Support from the board was sought to send out new letters to all eighteen families by December of 2008 with no responses if the families did not disagree

**Chairman Stan Jones requested the motion:**

Gina Crown – Made a motion to disapprove

Jerry Finley – Motion seconded

Decision: Unanimous consent

**Nevada Office of Veterans Services Report:**

Tim Tetz – Executive Director – Nevada Office of Veterans Services

**Overview:**

1. Took a moment to remember Daryl Mobley
2. Discussed the possibility of sending out post cards with the picture of the cemetery on them for Veterans Day and Memorial Day; more donations are needed
3. Discussed the cemetery expansion

- a. In June, the State Public Works Board Chairman agreed that having only seven available burial sites is an emergency situation
- b. The cost of the expansion project will now cost \$150,000 to begin
- 4. Northern Nevada State Veterans Home Update
  - a. Announced approval received for the Home
  - b. NOVS has employed an architect who is working on designs for the grounds at the mental health campus; they are also looking for alternate locations
  - c. Discussed the "Green House" design for the new Home
  - d. The cemetery committee members expressed their support for the project

**Guest Speaker:**

**Jim Tuxson – T&T Electric**

**Overview:**

- 1. Discussed the flagpole lighting project
  - a. Mr. Tuxson created a design of what the lighting will look like
  - b. They have met the criteria for the lighting needed
  - c. Beneficial to have four lights around the big pole
  - d. The cost is based on manufacturer donations as it will be \$10,000 for twenty lights at eighty amps each
  - e. Discussed the placement of the plaque which will hold the box for power access
  - f. Support from the committee was sought for the approval of the design and to move forward with the project

**Chairman Stan Jones requested a motion of approval:**

Jerry Finley – Made a motion to disapprove

Gina Crown – Motion seconded

Decision: Unanimous consent

**Future Meetings:**

Next meeting agreed to take place on October 6, 2008

**Adjournment****Chairman Stan Jones requested a motion:**

Jerry Finley – Made a motion to adjourn

Chuck Harton – Motion seconded

Decision: Unanimous consent

# SOUTHERN NEVADA VETERANS MEMORIAL CEMETERY

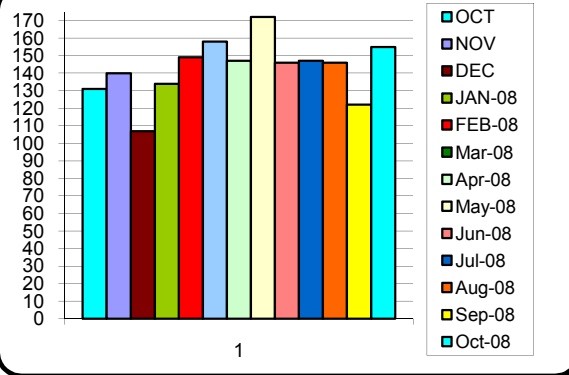
Burials as of end of Oct '08

Interments	Casket		Cremation		Totals
	Single	Double	Plot	Niche	
Veterans	0	0	0	0	0
Dependent	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Monthly Total</b>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Disinterment</b>					
Veterans	0	0	0	0	0
Dependent	0	0	0	0	0
<b>CY Total</b>	137	476	611	252	1476
<b>FY - Veterans</b>	49	131	180	70	430
<b>- Dependents</b>	2	65	54	19	140
<b>FY Total</b>	51	196	234	89	570

Total to Date (Since April,1990 to present)

	Casket	Cremation	Totals
Veterans	8955	9508	18463
Dependent	2518	2347	4865
<b>Combined Total to Date</b>	11473	11855	23328
<b>Total Disinterments to Date</b>	93	8	101
	Doubles	Plots	Niches
<b>Completed Re-open</b>	0	0	0

Plot Availability	Vacancy
Single Caskets	2761
Double Caskets	2195
Plots	1911
Niches	2739
<b>Total Plots Available</b>	<b>9606</b>





## **Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** July 29, 2008  
**City Hall**  
**401 California Avenue**  
**Boulder City, NV 89005**

**Call to Order**  
**Invocation**  
**Pledge of Allegiance**

Sean Fellows  
Steve Sanson  
Steve Sanson

**Roll Call**  
**Present:**

Sam Ruvolo  
Bob Garlow  
Steve Sanson  
Sean Fellows  
Sen. Warren Hardy  
Mitchell Kuhn  
Assemblyman Mark Manendo

**Absent:**

None

**NOVS Attendees:**

Jack Porrino – SNVMC Superintendent  
Stacy Lucas – Assistant to Deputy Director

**Guest Presenter:**

Howard Wick, Vietnam Veterans Motorcycle Club

### **Approval of this meeting's agenda:**

Steve Sanson – Made a motion to accept the agenda  
Sen. Hardy – Motion was seconded  
Decision: Unanimous consent – will stand as written.

### **Approval of minutes from last meeting:**

Steve Sanson – Made a motion to accept the minutes  
Bob Garlow – Motion was seconded  
Decision: Unanimous consent – will stand as written.

## **Cemetery & Agency Reports:**

### **Office of Veterans Services Report**

Jack Porrino – SNVMC Superintendent – Nevada Office of Veterans Services (on behalf of Carole Turner, Deputy Executive Director)

#### **Overview:**

1. April 29, 2008 Meeting Follow-up
  - a. Once budget for 2010/2011 biennium is finalized, SNVMC appropriation will be shared with committee.
2. NRS 417.230 Veterans Cemetery Advisory Committee Roles and Responsibility
3. Nevada State Veterans Home – Sparks
  - a. Preliminary drawings/plans will be available in coming months.
4. Nevada Office of Veterans Services
  - a. NOVS Toll-Free Number: 866-630-VETS.
  - b. Lowden Veterans Museum: All items now stored in PODS.
  - c. Elko Veterans Service Officer Program: Remote Benefits Delivery Program using video conferencing up and running.
  - d. Upcoming Outreaches: Laughlin (8/25), Mesquite (8/27), Nevada State GWOT Conference, Reno (9/13), UNLV Student Veterans Organization (10/8), Veterans Legislative Summit (12/6).
5. Next Veterans Service Commission Meeting: September 30<sup>th</sup>, Grant Sawyer Building.

### **Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery**

Jack Porrino – SNVMC Superintendent – Nevada Office of Veterans Services

#### **Overview:**

1. Agenda and minutes already addressed.
2. SNVMC Burials as of end of June 2008
  - a. Monthly total for June: 146
  - b. Total for CY 2008 to date: 906
  - c. Total to date since cemetery opened: 22,892
3. 2008 Donations & Expenditures April - June 2008
4. Road construction update: new entrance, road being built, completion in 2 weeks.

### **Phase IV Status**

Jack Porrino

#### **Overview:**

1. Planning complete, item merged with Administration Building update and removed from agenda.

### **Maintenance Building Status**

Jack Porrino

#### **Overview:**

1. Out for bids, construction scheduled to start in 2 months.
2. Will be located down Buchanan from main entrance, with its own entrance.
3. The POD storage unit for flags will be moved down there once completed.



### **Administration Building Update**

Jack Porrino

#### **Overview:**

1. Plans under review by Federal Government, expect to be able to request bids by next year.
2. Plans shared with Committee members.

### **Vietnam Wall Replica Status**

Bob Garlow

#### **Overview:**

1. "Veterans Memorial Committee" to be resurrected now that Lowden project over.
2. Committee to work with Porrino to plan locations of new memorials.
3. Next Volunteer Committee meeting: September 5<sup>th</sup> at 8:30am, SNVMC.

#### **Unfinished Business:**

### **Putting a flag next to veteran's names for free in the obituary section of the Review-Journal:**

Jack Porrino

#### **Overview:**

1. Discussion from last meeting recapped. Not much change since then.
2. Porrino to ask Deputy Director to check with State Attorney General on legality of service organizations requesting obituaries.
3. Fellows to draft letter to R-J for review and signature by entire Committee.
4. Continued to next meeting.

#### **New Business:**

### **Legislation to ensure cemetery stays green**

Jack Porrino

#### **Overview:**

1. Discussion re: legislation.
2. Motion by Kuhn to draft bill requesting that plots themselves remain green, sponsored by Manendo, co-sponsored by Hardy; Garlow seconded; unanimous consent, motion carried.
3. Continued to next meeting.

### **Request to add name of Lt. Christian, USMC to Mini-Vietnam Memorial Wall**

Sean Fellows, Howard Wick (member, Vietnam Veterans Motorcycle Club)

#### **Overview:**

1. Request made to Fellows and Tim Tetz, Executive Director, NOVS by Col. Woods, Marine Corps League.
2. Per Wick, Vietnam Veterans Motorcycle Club owns mini-wall, only names on it are from their club. Per Porrino, this is the case with all monuments at cemetery – organizations put only their members' names on monuments they place at cemetery.
3. Committee cannot act on this item as mini-wall is owned by different club; Fellows to so advise Col. Woods.
4. Discussion re: monuments at cemetery; possibility of statute or memorandum of understanding on file from organizations that have placed monuments for cemetery to

Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery Committee Meeting  
July 29, 2008

take over ownership when organizations can no longer tend to them due to organization membership aging and passing away.

5. Request for Tim Tetz and Carole Turner to confer with State Attorney General re: legal standing of cemetery with regard to monuments; request for memorandum of understanding to be drafted once legal status determined.
6. Status of monuments abandoned by organizations that placed them to be added as new business item for next meeting.

**Comments/Questions from Audience:**

None brought up.

**Future Agenda Items:**

1. Status of monuments abandoned by organizations that placed them

**Proposed Meeting Dates and Locations Discussion**

1. SNVMC Meeting November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008 – 10:00 AM – Boulder City

**Adjournment:**

Motion made to adjourn.

Motion seconded.

Decision: Unanimous consent – will stand as written.

JIM GIBBONS  
Governor



Nevada State Veterans Home  
100 Veterans Memorial Drive  
Boulder City, Nevada 89005  
(702) 332-6864 • Fax (702) 332-6762

Office of Veterans Services  
950 W. Owens, Rm. 111  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89106  
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STATE OF NEVADA  
**NEVADA OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES**  
5460 RENO CORPORATE DRIVE, SUITE 131  
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Southern Nevada Veterans  
Memorial Cemetery  
1900 Buchanan Boulevard  
Boulder City, Nevada 89005  
(702) 486-5920 • Fax (702) 486-5923

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Veterans Services Commission

**FROM:** Jeanette Rae

**DATE:** 11/20/2008

**SUBJECT:** Quarterly Meeting

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At the time of writing this report only a couple of months have passed since my last report to you so there have not been a lot of changes.

All of the new personnel have completed VBA's prescribed TRIP training and have received the majority of their accreditations. They are now able to certify copies of documents and will be allowed access to the VA computer programs as soon as we have worked out software and hardware issues at each location. Jeff and I are working together to resolve these issues.

**Outreach:** Team members continue to provide outreach at as many events and locations as budget and time allow. Highlights of these activities are listed here; complete reports are attached after my report.

- ◆ Quarterly Mesquite and Laughlin, NV outreach
- ◆ Women Veterans Health Seminar, Nov 7, 2008
- ◆ Owyhee PowWow, Nov 11, 2008
- ◆ UNLV Veterans Day Activities, Nov 11, 2008 (attended by Carole)
- ◆ Mobile outreach van deployment targeted for spring, 2009
- ◆ AVI Resort & Casino Special Veterans Expo, Bullhead City, February 23, 2008
- ◆ Fallon Veterans Service Day, May 23, 2009

Washoe County is investigating the idea of creating a specialty court for 'Veterans' modeled after the one created in Buffalo New York and in the news lately. This would be a diversionary court similar to the existing drug or mental health courts. I have been appointed to the study group they have established. This will be another way to identify

and assist veterans in need and get them connected with the benefits they have earned while hopefully keeping them from going down the wrong path. Tim has already approached the VARO Director for support of expedited processing of any claims that would be identified through this process. We hope to have a process in place in the next few months. Our next meeting is on December 1<sup>st</sup>.

**In the News:** 2009 COLA = The cost of living adjustment will be the largest in 15 years and probably the largest we will see for quite a while in the future. VA compensation and pension and 'some' military retiree payments will increase by **5.8%** effective December 1, 2008 with payments made on January 1, 2009.

Effective October 7, 2008 VA issued an interim final rule on the Presumption of Service Connection for Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS). The VA announced that ALS will become a presumptively compensable illness for all veterans with 90 days or more of continuously active service in the military. ALS, also called Lou Gehrig's disease, is a neuromuscular disease that is often relentlessly progressive and almost always fatal.

On November 3, 2008 VA published a proposed rule in the Federal Register to establish AL amyloidosis as an Agent Orange/herbicide presumptive disability. The intended effect of this proposed rule is to establish presumptive service connection for AL amyloidosis based on herbicide exposure. Comments on this proposed regulation must be received by VA on or before Jan 2, 2009.

Update on *Haas v. Peake* ('Blue Water' Navy veterans entitlement to disability benefits for diseases related to exposure to Agent Orange): On October 17, 2008, Mr Haas' attorneys filed a Petition for a Writ of Certiorari in the U.S. Supreme Court asking the Court to overturn the Federal Circuit's decision that denied Agent Orange-related VA benefits to Blue Water Vietnam Veterans. VA's response to the petition is due on November 21, 2008.

Enhanced VA Mortgage options now available for veterans (potential benefit to those in financial distress): Veterans with conventional home loans now have new options for refinancing to a VA guaranteed home loan. These new options are available as a result of the Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 2008 (PL 110-389), which the President signed into law on October 10, 2008. The new law makes changes to VA's home loan refinancing program. Veterans who wish to refinance their subprime or conventional mortgage may now do so for up to 100% of the value of the property. Additionally, Congress raised the VA's maximum loan amount for these types of refinancing loans. With the new legislation, such loans may be made up to \$729,750 depending on where the property is located. Originally set to expire at the end of this month, VA's authority to guaranty Adjustable Rate Mortgages (ARMs) and Hybrid ARMs was also extended under this new law through September 30, 2012.

**THIS JUST IN** – November 17, 2008 Secretary Peake announces travel reimbursement increases for eligible veterans. Effective this date, the mileage reimbursement rate for travel to VA facilities for medical care is increased from 28.5 cents per mile to **41.5 cents** per mile for all eligible veterans. While increasing the payment, the current deductible amounts applied to certain mileage reimbursements will remain frozen at \$7.77 for a one way trip, \$15.54 for a round trip and capped at a maximum of \$46.62 per calendar month. On January 9, 2009, these deductibles will decrease to \$3 for a one way trip, \$6

for a round trip, with a maximum of \$16 per calendar month. Deductibles can be waived if they cause a financial hardship to the veteran.

This reduction in deductibles will make more veterans eligible for mileage reimbursement than in the past. Veterans who live in closer proximity to VA medical facilities should be encouraged to recalculate the mileage criteria for their location. On January 9, 2009, many may find they are now eligible for reimbursement when previously the deductible prevented this benefit. At the new mileage rate of 41.5 cents, the new deductible of \$6 for a round trip is used up at 14.45 miles round trip.

JIM GIBBONS  
Governor



Nevada State Veterans Home  
100 Veterans Memorial Drive  
Boulder City, Nevada 89005  
(702) 332-6864 • Fax (702) 332-6762


Office of Veterans Services  
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Northern Nevada Veterans  
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STATE OF NEVADA  
**NEVADA OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES**  
5460 Reno Corporate Drive, #131  
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Southern Nevada Veterans  
Memorial Cemetery  
1900 Buchanan Boulevard  
Boulder City, Nevada 89005  
(702) 486-5920 • Fax (702) 486-5923

TO: Timothy Tetz  
Executive Director

FROM: Denise Welch   
Guardianship Case Manager

DATE: November 20, 2008

RE: Guardianship Roll Call

<u>Accounts</u>	<u>Status as of 11/20/08</u>
17	Active 2 VA Discharge Level
3	Court Discharge Level 3 VA Paperwork Bottleneck
1	Deceased VA Burial Award Pending
1	Partial Fiduciary by Court Order

JIM GIBBONS  
Governor



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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Chairwoman McClain & Members of the Veterans Service Commission

**FROM:** Carole Turner, Deputy Executive Director 

**DATE:** December 5, 2008

**SUBJECT:** Unique Veterans Report

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The Nevada Office of Veterans Services (NOVS) is committed to advocating for and assisting all Nevada veterans. Our most vulnerable veterans require programs and services designed specifically to meet their unique needs. NOVS is currently focusing on distinct veteran cohorts that have unique needs and warrant special assistance. Special NOVS programs have been designed to assist Women, Global War on Terror and homeless veterans and those in the NV higher education system. Below is a summary of the current initiatives designed to assist these unique veterans:

**Women Veterans** – The NOVS Women Veteran Coordinator position is currently vacant. The Deputy Executive Director has assumed this role on an interim basis. There are four initiatives currently in progress targeting women veterans. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Nevada Women Veterans Summit will be held in Reno, NV on Saturday, February 28<sup>th</sup>. Our women veteran's web page is being modified and will be deployed within the next 30 days. The number of women veterans registering for the NOVS mailing list has grown to over 500 names. A hard copy NOVS Women Veterans Newsletter will be published semi-annually and distributed to every female veteran on our mailing list and posted on the newly revamped women veteran's web page. Nevada women veterans were prominently featured in the Veterans Day issue of the *Review Journal* in an article entitled 'Women at War'. The Deputy Executive Director was highlighted in the November 10<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Las Vegas Business Press* 'Executive Snapshot', which is an affiliate of the *Review Journal*. Woman veteran trumpeter Carolyn Whaley was featured in the October 31<sup>st</sup> edition of the *Desert Valley Times*. Women veterans Debra Cole, Sharon Dixon and Carole Turner were interviewed in a 1-hour segment on KNPR on Veterans Day. The Deputy Executive is an active member of the VA Women Veteran's Advisory Committee.

**Global War On Terror Veterans** – NOVS co-sponsored the 1<sup>st</sup> annual GWOT conference in Reno, September 13, 2008. The 2<sup>nd</sup> annual conference will be held in Las Vegas in 2009. On-going partnership with the VA Southern Nevada Health Care System initiatives:

- OEF/OIF orientation briefings
- OEF/OIF Seamless Transition Program
  
- Resolution honoring KIA drafted

**Homeless Veterans** – HUD/Vet Program issued 105 rental assistance housing vouchers to the VA Southern Nevada Health Care System as part of a joint HUD/VA housing initiative. VA is partnering with the Clark County Housing Authority to administer this program, has established criteria for eligibility and is currently targeting low income, elderly vets with disabilities, OEF/OIF, women and women with children for the vouchers. Additional Southern Nevada homeless outreach activities include:

- Multi-agency Homeless Veterans Stand Down, May 14 -15, 2008
- Clark County Project Homeless Connect Wednesday, April 10<sup>th</sup> and October 8, 2008
- Actively partnering with H.E.L.P. of Southern Nevada , Veteran Service Organizations and U.S. Vets for homeless veterans referrals

**Rural Outreach** – Highlights of Agency-wide outreach activities include:

- Mobile outreach van deployment targeted for spring, 2009
- Quarterly Mesquite and Laughlin, NV outreach
- NOVS satellite offices located in Fallon and Elko
- VBA - Elko videoconferencing facility unveiled on July 24, 2008
- AVI Resort & Casino Special Veterans Expo, Bullhead City, February 23, 2008

**Veterans in the NV Higher Education System** – Southern Nevada outreach activities include:

- POW/MIA Veterans Day program November 10, 2008
- VSC September, 2008 meeting UNLV Student Veteran Organization briefing

**Action Item - VSC NSVH Veterans Condolence Card**





Vol. 23 No. 42

September 26, 2008

## VA BENEFITS AT A CROSSROADS: TIME TO FIND SOLUTIONS

by

Tim S. McClain

There are over twenty-three and a half million living veterans in the United States – and almost every veteran is entitled to one or more benefits conferred by Congress and administered by the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Although VA administers scores of benefits for veterans, the benefits garnering the most attention from the media, Congress and veterans groups are healthcare and disability compensation benefits. Following revelations of substandard living conditions for returning wounded active duty soldiers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in February 2007, several commissions, study groups and task forces were formed to review the situation and make recommendations for improvement in the VA benefits delivery system.<sup>1</sup>

This LEGAL BACKGROUNDER will address veterans benefits at a crossroads in a time when the nation is fighting a war on two fronts; when over 800,000 citizen soldiers are now veterans who served in the combat theater, when some have paid the ultimate price for freedom, others have suffered major injuries and still others are experiencing some identifiable physical or mental injury or disease as a result of their service to our country; and finally, when Congress and the American people must decide the appropriate level of benefits for disabled veterans now and in the future.

***The Current Veterans Benefits System.*** The laws conferring and governing veterans benefits are in Title 38, United States Code, and the implementing regulations are found in 38 Code of Federal Regulations. A veteran must apply for benefits, usually in writing or on various forms. Applying the criteria published in the applicable regulations, VA makes a determination whether the veteran is eligible for the claimed benefits, and the amount of any benefits. Eligibility for VA healthcare benefits is fairly straightforward: if *any* veteran<sup>2</sup> has a physical or mental injury or disease that was the result of active duty military service, she or he is entitled to lifetime VA medical care for that injury or disease. This is known as a “service-connected” injury or disease.<sup>3</sup> Some veterans are presumed eligible for healthcare as a matter of status even if they do not have a service-

<sup>1</sup>President’s Interagency Task Force on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes, report submitted April 2007; President’s Commission on Care for America’s Returning Wounded Warriors (commonly referred to as the Dole-Shalala Commission) issued its report on July 25, 2007; Institute of Medicine. *A 21<sup>st</sup> Century System for Evaluating Veterans for Disability Benefits*. Washington, D.C., National Academies Press, report of June 7, 2007. *Honoring the Call to Duty: Veterans’ Disability Benefits in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Veterans’ Disability Benefits Commission, Oct. 2007.

<sup>2</sup>“The term ‘veteran’ means a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable.” 38 U.S.C. § 101(2).

<sup>3</sup>“The term “service-connected” means, with respect to disability or death, that such disability was incurred or aggravated, or that the death resulted from a disability incurred or aggravated, in line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service.” 38 U.S.C. § 101(16).

**Tim S. McClain** is the former General Counsel of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and is currently a principal in P3, LLC of Washington, D.C., a consulting firm specializing in public-private partnerships.

connected ailment, such as former POWs and anyone who served in the Persian Gulf since 2001. Persian Gulf veterans must apply for VA medical benefits within five years of discharge from active duty if they do not otherwise have a service-connected injury or disease. 38 U.S.C. § 1710(e)(1)(D).

Many are familiar with the Social Security Administration's all or nothing disability claims system. Social Security pays only for total disability and the payments may be subject to income tax. No benefits are payable for partial disability or short-term disability and the level of benefits does not depend upon marital status.

The VA disability compensation system compensates for service-connected disabilities on a scale from 0% to 100%. The percentage of service-connected disability is derived from tables published in the *Federal Register* [38 C.F.R. §§4.1 *et. seq.*] and are displayed in a matrix by body systems and the degree of impairment. Payments are higher for veterans with a spouse and/or dependent children. The payments are not subject to federal or state income tax. The original intent of the rating tables was to provide compensation to World War II veterans for post-service loss of earning capacity due to their service-connected disabilities. As confirmed by the various commissions, the current compensation tables have very little correlation to today's employment environment.

On the surface the process of applying for VA disability compensation is deceptively simple. The veteran files a claim and submits evidence that he or she 1) meets the definition of eligible veteran in 38 U.S.C. § 101(2); 2) has a current physical or mental disability or ailment that causes some impairment; 3) the current disability is the result of an event which occurred while the veteran was on active military duty and which caused the current disability or ailment; and, 4) some evidence of the degree of impairment.

A glance at the rating tables, however, reveals the complexity of the VA adjudicator's task. A single claim might contain 4, 6 or even 10 different issues, e.g., injured knee, sprained back, hypertension, shoulder injury, PTSD, and alcoholism secondary to all of the conditions. For each issue claimed the adjudicator must determine each of the above-mentioned elements. VA takes an average of 185 days to fully adjudicate an initial claim submitted by a veteran. During this time the veteran is not receiving any payments from VA, but the veteran will receive retroactive payments if any compensation is ultimately awarded.

***Seeking Recourse in the Courts.*** Some veterans are so frustrated with the current system they have resorted to the federal courts. There was a fascinating recent case in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, *Veterans for Common Sense, and Veterans United for Truth, Inc. v. James B. Peake, M.D., Secretary of Veterans Affairs*, Case no. C-07-3758 SC (Dist. Ct. ND CA). The complaint was originally reported as a class action but the case went forward as a petition for injunctive relief. Plaintiffs alleged that VA failed to provide the healthcare services to which the class members were constitutionally entitled, and also failed to timely decide claims for VA disability benefits. The case is fascinating not because individual veterans complained about their particular issues, but because the action indicted the entire VA system, from healthcare delivery to the disability claims process. Plaintiffs essentially asked the District Court to issue a permanent injunction which would have placed VA into court receivership while VA devised a plan for a better, faster way of delivering healthcare and other benefits, followed by continued judicial involvement in overseeing implementation.

The court issued its *Memorandum of Decision, Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law* ["Decision"] on June 25, 2008 concluding, "The remedies sought by Plaintiffs are beyond the power of this Court and would call for a complete overhaul of the VA system, something clearly outside of this Court's jurisdiction." Decision at 82. The court recognized that exclusive jurisdiction over issues of law and fact related to veterans benefits rests with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs under 38 U.S.C. § 511,<sup>4</sup> with exclusive review in the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, an Article I appellate court, 38 U.S.C. §§ 7251-7299, further appellate review in the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, 38 U.S.C. § 7292, and final review in the U.S. Supreme Court. Veterans for Common Sense has appealed the court's decision.

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<sup>4</sup>"The Secretary shall decide all questions of law and fact necessary to a decision by the Secretary under a law that affects the provision of benefits by the Secretary to veterans or the dependents or survivors of veterans. Subject to subsection (b), the decision of the Secretary as to any such question shall be final and conclusive and may not be reviewed by any other official or by any court, whether by an action in the nature of mandamus or otherwise." 38 U.S.C. § 511(a).

The Supreme Court rarely reviews a veterans' case from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, but on June 16, 2008 the court granted *certiorari* in *Peake v. Sanders*, Case No. 07-1209. At issue is whether the court of appeals erred in holding that a failure of the VA to give the written notice to the veteran as required by the Veterans Claims Assistance Act of 2000<sup>5</sup> (VCAA) must be presumed prejudicial to the veteran claimant. VA asserts that the court of appeals failed to take due account of the rule of prejudicial error<sup>6</sup> and incorrectly found that prejudice was presumed if there was a failure to provide the required notice without a showing of actual prejudice, and that this interpretation conflicts with rulings in other circuits. Oral argument and a decision are expected by 2009 and the result could have a significant impact on how VA process claims under the VCAA.

***Are Sweeping Changes Needed in the Veterans Benefits System?*** According to many in Congress and members of various veteran service organizations (VSO), the answer is resoundingly in the affirmative. It takes an average of 185 days for VA to make a decision on an initial claim for disability benefits – much longer if there is an appeal involved. Everyone agrees this is too long, but few agree on how to make the system more efficient.

The current disability claims system is a creature of statute. Congress has dictated what benefits will be made available to veterans and Congress has the power to change (improve) the system. The Dole-Shalala Commission gave Congress a road map for change to modernize the system and the President has asked Congress to pass laws implementing those recommendations. The Commission recommended that Congress revise the objectives for VA disability payments to include:

- *“Transition Payments”*— payments intended to cover living expenses for disabled veterans and their families. They should receive either three months of base pay, if they are returning to their community and *not* participating in further rehabilitation, *or* longer-term payments to cover family living expenses, if they are participating in further rehabilitation or education and training programs.
- *Earnings-loss Payments*—payments received once transition payments end to make up for any lower earning capacity remaining after training;
- *Quality-of-life Payments*— payments designed to compensate for non-work-related effects of permanent physical and mental combat-related injuries.

In other words, the Commission recommends that the VA disability system be refocused to concentrate on rehabilitation and helping the veteran integrate into the work force rather than lifetime payments designed to replace potential lost earnings, which forms the basis for the current disability payments system. This would entail a seismic shift in Congress' approach to veterans' disability benefits.

Many veterans organizations agree with most of the Commission's recommendations, but specifically disagree with the recommendation to overhaul the disability rating system. They see any effort to impose rehabilitation and training as a condition for payments and any effort to reevaluate a veteran's physical or mental status after initially receiving VA disability payments as an effort to strip veterans and their families of their livelihood. In essence, this specific recommendation for overhauling the system has become the “third rail” of veterans politics and apparently one which this Congress will gladly boot to the next Congress, or beyond.

***America and Congress Must Decide the Future of Veterans Benefits.*** The future of veterans' benefits is at a crossroads. According to many veterans, the current system for determining entitlement to certain benefits, especially disability compensation payments, is very complicated and takes too long. They point to the backlog of claims (currently almost 400,000) and the average time for a veteran to receive a decision on his or her initial claim. There is no simple solution. VA will make decisions on over 830,000 claims this year, but the number of claims received will be nearly 900,000. In the past two years Congress has provided VA with money to hire new employees to increase the number of claims specialists by over twenty percent. Still, the backlog of claims remains and the number of average days to adjudicate the claims continues to rise.

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<sup>5</sup>PUB. L. NO. 106-475, 114 Stat. 2096. See also 38 C.F.R. 3.159.

<sup>6</sup>38 U.S.C. § 7261(b)(2) (Supp. V 2005); 5 U.S.C. § 706.

Congress is at a crossroads. Congress can either continue to provide funds to perpetuate the current adjudication system, or it can appropriate funds and legislate a new streamlined, simplified system. The VA disability claims process is too complex and it is burdened by paper claims. Some observers believe that simplification of the system is too complex and daunting, but others believe a solution exists in a partnership between VA and private industry. Congress and VA should challenge private industry to develop a fair and efficient claims system for VA disability compensation claims. This cannot be just another study about the appropriate level of benefits; rather this partnership must focus on two major deliverables. First, industry must produce an architecture for a claims process that is simple enough for veterans to understand, and efficient enough to ensure rapid, accurate decisions. Second, a list of laws that must be passed or repealed in order to implement the new system. History has shown that almost any change to the veterans benefits system will be met with skepticism and resistance from various veterans groups and organizations. Congress must have the will to pass or revise laws to effectively implement the new system.

An example of a law that will surely come under scrutiny by any private industry consultant is the VCAA, *supra*. The VCAA directed VA to provide assistance to the veteran in gathering evidence in support of a claim and written notice to the veteran of evidence that the veteran must gather to support her or his claim. The Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims has held VA to a standard requiring specific wording of certain letters and presuming prejudice if the exact words were not used. That strict interpretation frames the issue which was the subject of the writ of *certiorari* and the Supreme Court's grant mentioned above. Now that we have had almost eight years of experience with VCAA, Congress should evaluate the impact of the act on veterans and the VA disability claims process. Some groups feel certain provisions of VCAA have significantly added to the backlog of claims and the number of days to decide a claim. If that is the case, VCAA must be revised by Congress to more precisely describe the information VA is required to provide to a veteran claimant and reevaluate the waiting periods imposed by the statute before VA can make a decision on the claim.

Further, now that Congress has rescinded an antiquated provision preventing lawyers from charging for representing a veteran in a claim before VA, 38 U.S.C. § 5904(d), the claims system is more akin to an adversarial system common to many types of government claims and workers' compensation systems. As such, Congress should eliminate some of the more paternalistic provisions of the current law that add to the adjudication timeline of the claim but do not add value for the claimant. Congress should make "substantial compliance" with VCAA the acceptable legal standard for notification to claimants.

**Conclusion.** Social spending on veterans has provided tremendous returns for the nation. The original GI Bill of 1946 is a good example of targeted social spending and allowed an entire generation of World War II veterans to access higher education and realize upward social mobility. The new Post 9/11 GI Bill holds promise to do the same for this generation of veterans. Congress and the nation must decide the focus of VA disability benefits, whether the Dole-Shalala recommendations of rehabilitation, training and return to the workforce are appropriate, or the current system of lifetime compensation for potential lost earnings capacity. Whichever direction is appropriate, Congress and America must decide how best to compensate veterans for their sacrifices in service to our nation.

Congress has the power, and must find the will, to legislate a 21<sup>st</sup> century solution for the VA claims process to include a digital claims file and a simplified process for rating service-connected disabilities. Private industry should be challenged to find a solution that provides better, faster service to the veteran claimant (e.g., a decision on a veteran's claim within three months, the ability to track his or her claim online, and a single digital file for all benefits earned through service to our country) which produces consistent decisions across the entire VA system. There have been enough studies. It is time to find and implement real solutions.

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City, State, Zip Code

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**Assemblywoman Debbie Smith**  
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**Sparks NV 89431**

### **Nevada Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business Opportunity Act**

**What:** Nevada Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business Opportunity Act

**Sponsor:** Assemblywoman Debbie Smith

**History:** The federal government, California, Florida and Michigan all have similar Legislation.

**Why:** To rectify the economic disadvantage of service-disabled Veterans who are statistically the least likely to be self-employed when compared to the Veteran population as a whole and who have made extraordinary sacrifices on behalf of the nation, the state and the public, by providing opportunities for Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Small Businesses through increased contracting opportunities with the state.

**Contact:** Call 775-825-6044 x101 or email: [RG@NVPropMaint.com](mailto:RG@NVPropMaint.com) for more information.

**How:** Support this Legislation honoring the sacrifices and contributions made by disabled American Veterans. Sign below stating your support for this Legislation. Affix postage and mail today! *Thank you.*



Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## ***Peace and Blessings***



## ***Nevada Veteran Services Commission***

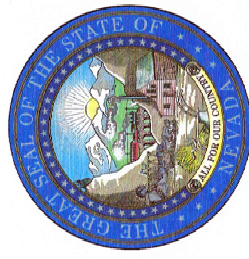


## ***Serving America's Heroes***

### **Nevada Veteran Services Commission**

Office of Veterans Services  
5460 Reno Corporate Drive, Ste. 131  
Reno, Nevada 89511

866-630-VETS  
Website: <http://www.veterans.nv.gov>



***May the peace which comes  
from the memories of love  
shared comfort you now and  
in the days ahead.***

***With heartfelt condolences on  
the loss of your loved one,***

***Kathy McClain, Chairman  
Nevada Veterans Services Commission***

State of Nevada  
Department of Motor Vehicles  
Veteran Declaration Count by County  
3rd Quarter 2008

Declared Veterans	Counts through 9/30/2008	3rd Quarter 2008 Totals	To Date Totals
CARSON CITY	1,420	278	1,698
CHURCHILL	1,110	195	1,305
CLARK	39,033	5,484	44,517
DOUGLAS	1,067	229	1,296
ELKO	739	169	908
ESMERALDA	39	7	46
EUREKA	39	10	49
HUMBOLDT	164	44	208
LANDER	62	13	75
LINCOLN	95	12	107
LYON	1,648	286	1,934
MINERAL	247	36	283
NYE	2,796	334	3,130
PERSHING	75	16	91
STOREY	181	38	219
WASHOE	8,999	1,557	10,556
WHITE PINE	186	47	233
NOT KNOWN	874	150	1,024
TOTALS	58,774	8,905	67,679





# bulletin

National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission

1608 K Street, N.W. • Washington, D.C. 20006

K. Robert Lewis, Chairman - Connecticut

Peter S. Gaytan, Director - Maryland

27-08

September 25, 2008

## Presumption of Service Connection for Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) published an interim final rule, effective September 23, 2008, establishing presumption of service connection for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), commonly known as Lou Gehrig's Disease, for any veteran with at least 90 continuous days of active duty service who develops the disease any time after separation from service. Prior to this new regulation, ALS, like other organic diseases of the nervous system, was subject to a one year presumption.

ALS is a rare and fatal neurological degenerative disease with no known cause or cure. The median survival period for people with ALS is three years from onset of symptoms and most people with ALS die from respiratory failure within five years. In November 2006, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) released a report entitled *Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis in Veterans: Review of the Scientific Literature*. The IOM concluded that there was limited and suggestive evidence of an association between the development of ALS and military service. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs subsequently determined that there is sufficient evidence establishing a correlation between ALS and activities in military service that supports a presumption of service connection for ALS for any veteran with that diagnosis. Accordingly, this interim final rule establishes section 3.318 (title 38 Code of Federal Regulations) to provide that the development of ALS at any time after discharge or release from active military, naval, or air service is sufficient to establish service connection for that disease. Paragraph (b) of this new section provides that this presumption of service connection of ALS does not apply if there is "affirmative evidence that ALS was not incurred during or aggravated by such service or affirmative evidence that ALS was caused by the veteran's own willful misconduct."




VA comments published in the interim final rule concede that there is little likelihood that either of those standards will be met with regard to any particular claim. Presumption of service connection for ALS does not apply if the veteran did not have active, continuous service of 90 days or more.

The provisions of this interim final rule apply to all claims pertaining to service connection for ALS received by VA on or after September 23, 2008. The regulation also applies to claims or appeals pending before VA, the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA), the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC) or the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit on the effective date of the interim final rule. Finally denied ALS claims will not be automatically reopened. Veterans and eligible survivors (in the case dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) claims) whose claims were finally denied prior to the effective date of this new rule will have to file to reopen their claims. VA, however, has informed The American Legion that due to the relatively small number of cases involved, it will take steps to locate those whose claims were previously denied in order to inform them of the new regulation and the opportunity to file new claims. Regardless of VA's outreach efforts, accredited American Legion representatives are strongly encouraged to review their old files in order to identify previously denied ALS claims for the purpose of filing claims under the new regulation. A DIC claim should be pursued if the veteran died since the original service connection claim was denied and there is an eligible survivor to pursue such a claim.

Please contact Steve Smithson, Deputy Director for Claims Service, VA&R, at (202) 263-2985 or [ssmithshon@legion.org](mailto:ssmithshon@legion.org) if you have any questions or concerns.

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PETER S. GAYTAN, Director  
National Veterans Affairs and  
Rehabilitation Commission



**Department of  
Veterans Affairs**

Office of Public Affairs  
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## **News Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
October 30, 2008

### **New Law Authorizes Veterans' Salutes during National Anthem**

WASHINGTON -- Veterans and active-duty military not in uniform can now render the military-style hand salute during the playing of the national anthem, thanks to changes in federal law that took effect this month.

"The military salute is a unique gesture of respect that marks those who have served in our nation's armed forces," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "This provision allows the application of that honor in all events involving our nation's flag."

The new provision improves upon a little known change in federal law last year that authorized veterans to render the military-style hand salute during the raising, lowering or passing of the flag, but it did not address salutes during the national anthem. Last year's provision also applied to members of the armed forces while not in uniform.

Traditionally, members of the nation's veterans service organizations have rendered the hand-salute during the national anthem and at events involving the national flag while wearing their organization's official head-gear.

The most recent change, authorizing hand-salutes during the national anthem by veterans and out-of-uniform military personnel, was sponsored by Sen. Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma, an Army veteran. It was included in the Defense Authorization Act of 2009, which President Bush signed on Oct. 14.

The earlier provision authorizing hand-salutes for veterans and out-of-uniform military personnel during the raising, lowering or passing of the flag, was contained in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2008, which took effect Jan. 28, 2008.

# # #

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**good [ ]**

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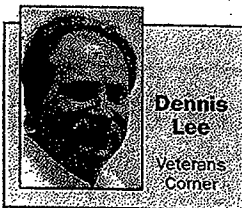
# Musician veteran to grace this year's ceremonies

While most Veterans Day parades are on the weekend of Nov. 8, Mesquite will be celebrating this Saturday — a week early. Observances will begin at 7:45 a.m. at the Veterans Memorial Park with a memorial service.

"It will be real nice," said Al Litman. "We'll have several speakers along with Carolyn Whaley who will be playing trumpet to the colors and Taps."

"Also, 7:45 a.m. is a great time for this to begin. It will be a really nice morning, and it will be light outside (emphasis on the light). Before we always started at 6:45 a.m. and it was dark and cold, but this year we've moved it ahead an hour and it looks to be a great day weather-wise."

Participants in the parade are asked to arrive at Old Mill Park at 8:30 a.m. to get their assign-



**Dennis Lee**  
Veterans Corner

ments. The parade will begin at 10 a.m. starting on Mesquite Boulevard at Willow Street and then proceeding West down to Arrowhead Lane.

After the parade, about noon, everyone is invited back to the Veterans Memorial Park for a community barbecue.

"We will have entertainment and it will be a great time for everyone," said Litman.

"We'll have 52 units entered

this year. The grand marshal is Bill McClure, executive director of the Chamber of Commerce. We'll have Vietnam Veterans groups from here and St. George. The VFW post from Las Vegas will be coming with their honor and color guard. We'll also have the Virgin Valley Marching Band and the Hughes Middle School's drum line, along with lots of community groups, but no politicians (emphasis on no).

"This parade is not about politicians, campaigning or about businesses promoting their businesses. This is for the veterans."

"We have Cactus Cruisers who will bring all these old cars. We'll have the Shriners who will take up a half block with their little cars and all sorts of other stuff. We have a Marine unit on horseback coming from Barstow, and we're still looking to see if we can get a flyover from the Air Force."

The parade will even have a veteran horse, a retired cavalry horse called Sergeant Comanche, from St. George.

"We have some real interesting vets. Anna Murphy, our 90 year old WWII veteran, will be riding in the parade, along with other WWII lady veterans," said Litman.

Veteran and trumpeter Carolyn



Carolyn Whaley will play Taps at Veterans Day ceremonies.

Whaley will play for the raising of the colors along with Taps.

She joined the Air Force in 1959, and became a member of the Women's Air Force Band, playing trumpet. The band was only in existence from 1951 to 1961. A total of 235 young women served in this unique unit.

"We were extensively utilized for concerts and broadcasts, in conjunction with troop entertainment and recruitment," said Whaley.

Some of the more notable things the group was involved in were performances with such TV personalities as Dave Garaway, Arthur Godfrey, Gary Moore, Fred Waring, and Ed Sullivan. They were featured on NBC's Wide World, and played at the Rockefeller Plaza where it was estimated that more than five million people saw them perform. They also marched in three inaugural parades, logged approximately 70 flying hours a month, and 125,000 miles per year.

"I was 18 years old when I went in and really enjoyed the experience and playing my instrument," said Whaley. "I had to go through quite an extensive audition to be able to get in."

The most notable event that stands out to Whaley was the inaugural parade for President John F. Kennedy.

"It was so cold," said Whaley, "and we had to wear these overcoats that had to weigh 100

pounds each. It was just awfully cold."

"But I was very proud to be in my country and to wear the uniform."

After Whaley got out in she got her degree at Cal Fullerton, and then taught in mental music in the school district for 30 years in Barstow. She then moved to Las Vegas where she and two other veterans of the Air Force Band, Ma Barnett and Val Johnson, formed a small group called Veterans Note.

"We played at nursing homes and all sorts of veterans' including Mesquite where we played at the nursing home (Highland Manor), perform the mayor's breakfast, and I to do the bugling at the memorial services. We also travel around doing school reunions. We played the '40s and music," said Whaley.

And while the other band members have passed, Whaley is still active. She is a member of the Women's Veterans of Nevada and every Thursday she plays Taps for indigent veterans at the Veterans Memorial Cemetery.

"It is really sad," said Whaley. "Two weeks ago we did 14 services for these veterans, and one person showed up. It is important, but not many people know that this even goes on. We're proud to just be the help."



BCN 11-6-08

BOULDER CITY NEWS | November 6-12, 2008

**SENIOR FOCUS** Gary Bermeosolo

## Freedom needs passion of future generations



Former Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jesse Brown once said, "Freedom is not free. ... We will be the land of the free only as

long as we are the land of the brave."

This month, as we celebrate Veterans Day and reflect on the sacrifices so many brave men and women have made for us, it is important we understand the significance of Mr. Brown's comment. We will only be free as long as future generations embrace the torch of liberty with a passion for patriotism so strong they might willingly die for it.

Generations before us have possessed this passion and thousands upon thousands have willingly gone to their

deaths so you and I and our children could experience the joys of freedom in America. Will future generations share the patriotic passion of generations before them?

This question has sparked serious discussion nationwide, and many of us are justifiably worried that future generations will be far less willing to put their lives on the line than those who went before them because of the perception that we are turning our backs on America's heroes, our veterans, by forgetting the commitment Lincoln uttered more than 100 years ago: "To care for him who shall have borne the battle."

This perception is not new. Many years ago Kipling wrote:

"When war is on and danger high,  
"God and soldier are the

cry,  
"But when war is over and wrongs are righted,  
"God is forgotten and soldiers slighted."

We know Kipling was a great poet, but was he also a prophet? I certainly hope not, for I firmly believe the true strength of a nation may be found in its reverence to a higher power and its willingness to acknowledge its country's defenders. To do otherwise is to encourage an army of individuals who are unwilling to put themselves in harm's way for fear of being left alone after the battle.

I believe it is incumbent on all Americans to assure that we never, ever forget those who have served so valiantly so that you and I can enjoy the freedom that is America. Freedom and America! That's really what veterans are all about. Before they

were veterans, they were servicemen, and as they ducked bullets in a foxhole, jungle, or desert, flew planes over hostile enemy territory or dodged torpedoes from an intruding submarine, their thoughts were always of home ... of the images of freedom.

My belief is shared by many who have acknowledged, through their actions, that the preservation of freedom depends largely on our ability to see and appreciate what we've got and to understand how we got it.

After all, "Freedom is not free. ... We will be the land of the free only as long as we are the land of the brave."

*Gary Bermeosolo is the administrator of the Nevada State Veterans Home in Boulder City, a 180-bed skilled nursing facility. For more information, call 332-6717.*

# Veteran keeping his 64-year-old promise

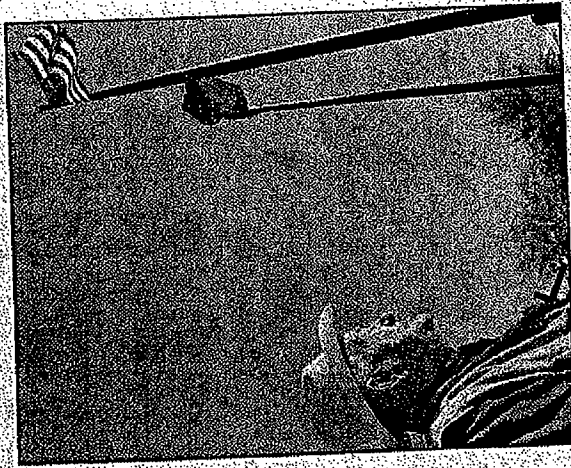
By CASSIE TOMLIN

## Info

Every morning and every night, John Malinky pledges his allegiance to the American flag on a 35-foot pole outside the Nevada State Veterans Home. He promised, nearly 65 years ago, if he ever got back from World War II, he would honor the country with the pledge daily. Malinky, 86, says living at the veterans home is a privilege he enjoys in exchange for his service in the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division Artillery in Italy and Germany.

The veteran says he's often showered with anonymous gifts in his exchange for his service in the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division Artillery in Italy and Germany.

See VET on Page 12



CASSIE TOMLIN/STAFF PHOTO  
John Malinky, a World War II Army veteran, is outside the Nevada State Veterans Home.

## VET from Page 1

# Veterans to be honored with ceremony, barbecue

room from thankful strangers, and on Veterans Day, he and almost 180 other residents will be honored with a church ceremony, barbecue, and trips to the Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Boulder City for commemorations and the Veterans Day Parade in downtown Las Vegas.

The ceremony at the veterans cemetery, at 1:30 p.m. in the chapel, will be one of a couple of public commemorations in Boulder City on Nov. 11. The American Legion will also hold an observance of Veterans Day at 11 a.m. at Legion Hall, 508 California Ave.

Malinky served as a cook and went on dangerous volunteer missions he said he would rather not remember. He and his division were outside Germany in May 1945 when the country surrendered.

In 1965, he came to Las Vegas to work at Caesars Palace as a cook and a bellman. He moved to the veterans home in 2006.

He said he and the other residents don't share their war stories, though they're proud and know the importance of their service.

Malinky plans to celebrate on Veterans Day. Though he doesn't like to reminisce, he appreciates being appreciated.

"It makes me happy," he said.

Cassie Tomlin can be reached at 948-2073 or [cassie.tomlin@hdcpub.com](mailto:cassie.tomlin@hdcpub.com).



# Lane battles tough enemy

Ex-boxing referee  
struggles after stroke



REVIEW-JOURNAL FILE PHOTO

BUSINESS | SECTION E

## Aliante Station prepares for debut

WEEKEND MAGAZINES



COURTESY PHOTO

Billie D'Entremont, right, served as a SPAR in the U.S. Coast Guard during World War II. Guard women were known as SPARs, named after the guard's motto, "Semper Paratus, Always Ready."

# WOMEN AT WAR

Five area female veterans share their stories



## NOT JUST THE BOYS



Peggy Randle, second from left, leads a military funeral for indigent veterans at Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Boulder City. Randle and veterans Marie Vellis, far right, and Billie D'Entremont, second from right, routinely conduct military funerals for veterans who have no family or friends.

JOHN LOCHER/REVIEW-JOURNAL



## ► VETERANS: Many women deny

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1J

have a clear understanding of what a veteran is, Turner says. A common misconception is that a person must have been in battle to receive the designation of military veteran. And that has led many women veterans to deny themselves the benefits that are provided to those who served in the U.S. military and were honorably discharged.

"I never felt like I was qualified to be called a veteran," says Billie D'Entremont, who served in the Coast Guard during World War II. "I would be at gatherings and people would say 'Would the veterans stand up?' I wouldn't stand up. I thought the people wanted to see these fellows."

Turner hopes to reach out to local women veterans and educate them about their status and benefits.

With Veterans Day coming on Tuesday, the Review-Journal asked five women veterans to share their stories.

### BILLIE D'ENTREMONT, YEOMAN 2ND CLASS, U.S. COAST GUARD WORLD WAR II

Billie D'Entremont, now 89, was only 24 when she enlisted in the Coast Guard's Women's Reserve in 1943.

It was only during World War II that the United States started allowing women to serve with some level of military rank and status and in fields other than nursing. But the idea of women in the ranks was controversial; many felt they didn't belong.

That attitude was well-known but didn't deter D'Entremont. Living near Lake Michigan, she developed a deep respect for the Coast Guard, which played an integral part in her city, patrolling the waters.

"I joined because I felt I should be doing something, which was the general opinion of so many people during World War II," she says.

Still, she had no idea what to expect once she left "boot training."

"I remember we were all enthusiastic," she says of her fellow SPARs, the term used to refer to Coast Guard women. "The men's response wasn't exactly great. Fellows would say, 'My sister's not going to join.' People thought we were to go in to be pleasant to the men."

Once, while walking down the street in her uniform, some women spit at D'Entremont.

"I knew they felt that way but I thought, 'How uninformed.' A lot of people didn't think that was the right thing to do," D'Entremont remembers.

She ended up stationed in Hawaii, where she worked as a medical yeoman, or a receptionist in a doctor's office. After some initial resistance, D'Entremont fit right in.

"I felt sometimes I had to prove myself, but nothing was ever mean spirited. I didn't feel like I was being taken advantage of because I was a



Air Force veteran Pamela Robinson sits in a C-130 flight simulator in 1986.

woman," she recalls.

The mother of four and grandmother to eight says though she made personal sacrifices to join the military, she never quite considered herself a veteran. That changed in 1995, when she was asked to join a group for women veterans. They visited a naval ship and met the skipper, a woman. She walked up to D'Entremont's group, shook their hands, looked them "square in the eye" and said, "Thank you. If you had not paved the way, I would not be here today."

"From that day on, I felt more like a veteran," she says.

### PEGGY RANDLE, CORPSMAN, U.S. NAVY, KOREAN CONFLICT

Peggy Randle, 72, joined the Navy in 1955 hoping to get a little education.

"Which I did. On many levels, believe me," says Randle, who served two years active duty and then seven in the reserves. "I learned pretty quickly we were about as popular as a skunk at a picnic."

Women were still new to the armed forces in the mid-1950s, and Randle remembers how the men accepted them: They didn't.

During boot camp, when Randle and her unit of women marched to the chow hall, male enlistees would line the path. They couldn't talk to the women or say disparaging things, she recalls, but they could certainly give hand signals. And they did.

They were called W.M., for women marines, but the initials took on all kinds of meanings, such as "walking mattress."

"Women who joined the military then were considered whores. But we were a determined group. I'm pretty stubborn, I pretty well stand up for what I believe," Randle says. "If I hadn't, I wouldn't have gone into the service."

Despite the resistance, Randle carved out a memorable service record, working in an operating room and becoming a cross-service medic for the Army and Air Force.

"I like to fly anyway," Randle says of her days flying in helicopters as a medic. "Lifting off in a helicopter with no doors is a real trip. (The military) was fun, I enjoyed it."

For a long time, women



GARY THOMPSON/REVIEW-JOURNAL Today, Pamela Robinson volunteers with Women Veterans of Nevada.

veterans didn't get their due, she says, but that's changed in the past few years.

"It has changed for the woman veteran," she says, recounting the time she was at a veteran's memorial celebration and a retired Air Force colonel shook her hand and thanked her for her service. "I was blown away. It left me speechless. All I could think to say was, 'Thank you, sir, for yours.'"

Randle says she's always tried to help those who don't have a voice, and she continues that tradition today in her role with the Women Veterans of Nevada. Once a week, she presides over funeral services for indigent veterans at Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery. Along with other members, Randle gives the veterans a military burial.

"It needs to be done. Someone needs to recognize their service," Randle says.

### PAMELA ROBINSON, STAFF SERGEANT, U.S. AIR FORCE, DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM

Though her Vietnam veteran father inspired Pamela Robinson, 48, to join the Air Force in 1979, she was well aware of the path carved by women who preceded her.

"I was always very thankful of the women who went before me. They had it a lot worse than I did," says Robinson, who served as a flight engineer on C-130s.

Though women had come



# themselves the benefits they've earned



JESSICA EBELHAR/REVIEW-JOURNAL

Veteran Sharon Dixon, in her home, received a Purple Heart for an injury received in Iraq in 2003.



COURTESY PHOTO

Sharon Dixon carried three weapons during her time in Iraq.

a long way in the military by the time Robinson joined, she still felt some resistance to her sex. The Navy was her first choice, because she thought it would be cool to work aboard a ship. But at that time, she was told women weren't allowed to serve on Navy ships. That actually changed in October 1978, when the Navy began assigning women to noncombatant ships.

Her reasons for joining the military weren't much different from a man's reasons, she says. The economy was bad in the 1970s, gasoline was expensive and jobs were scarce. With job security, the military was very appealing.

"I just thought it was a really cool life, because you got to go out and see the world," she recalls. "We had a lot of kids in the family, so we had to earn our own college money. I thought, 'Oh my gosh, if I serve my country, I could get an education.'"

The Air Force was making a conscious effort

to integrate women into male-dominated career fields, Robinson says, so she went into AWACS, Airborne Warning and Control System, flying aboard airplanes that conducted surveillance and searched for enemy aircraft. The job required her to go through basic survival school, prisoner of war training and water survival school. She and 11 men spent a week in the woods, learning to evade capture, how to make an outhouse and how to use a parachute for things other than jumping out of an airplane.

Though she endured some situations that "they call sexual harassment now," Robinson, who left the Air Force in 1991, didn't let that have a negative impact on her service.

"The way I looked at it, when I was in that uniform I wasn't a man or a woman, I was an airman," she says. "When you were a flier, you were a flier, you were a crew member. Not a man or woman."

## SARAH JOHNSON-ROBLES, TECHNICAL SERGEANT U.S. AIR FORCE, VIETNAM, DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM

Sarah Johnson-Robles, 56, knows the question is inevitable. When someone discovers that she is an Air Force veteran, they ask her what kind of plane she flew.

"I tell them a BD4D. Big desk, four drawers," says Johnson-Robles, who retired in 1993 after 21 years working in administration.

When she wears her Thunderbirds Polo shirt — during part of her career, she was assigned to the Thunderbirds Squadron, and once a Thunderbird, always a Thunderbird — people are more likely to assume she's a military wife and not the veteran.

Still, it seems easier for the women serving in the military today, she says. Gone are the makeup classes in basic training, where women were taught how to apply foundation and blush. Women seem to be respected more, she says.

"Even though I had my records, I had to re-establish my credibility with every new assignment I had in the Air Force," she says. "That attitude has changed."

The Air Force did for Johnson-Robles what it does for a lot of men: It got her out of a small Arizona town where she had no job or education prospects.

## SHARON DIXON, STAFF SERGEANT, ARMY NATIONAL GUARD, OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

Sharon Dixon, 49, signed up for the Army National Guard thinking she would dedicate one weekend a month plus two weeks a year to the military. Until Sept. 11, 2001.

Shortly after the terrorist attacks, Dixon's Nevada Guard unit was activated and deployed to California for a year. Only four months after returning home, the grandmother and longtime Las Vegas was on her way to Iraq, where, as military police, her unit was charged with the task of guarding prisoners at Abu Ghraib. Dixon's military experience illustrates how far women have come since World War II, when they were restricted to mostly secretarial and nursing jobs. In Iraq, Dixon carried a 9 mm pistol, an M-16 rifle and a shotgun. She performed the same duties as men of her rank; her life was as much at-risk as any other.

"Before we left Washington for Iraq, our first sergeant said some of us wouldn't come back," Dixon remembers.

Only a month after being in the country, Dixon was injured when her truck, carrying nine soldiers, was hit by an explosive device. She sustained a head injury, the effects of which she still suffers from.

She received a Purple Heart but feels like she has to battle the Veteran's Administration over benefits. The men who were on her truck don't seem to have that problem, she says.

Contact reporter Sonya Padgett at spadgett@reviewjournal.com or 702-380-4564.



# WOMEN AT WAR

*Many female veterans finally getting their due*

By SONYA PADGETT

REVIEW-JOURNAL

For most people, the word "veteran" calls to mind images of American men storming the beaches of Normandy, hoisting the American flag on a hill surrounded by enemy soldiers or otherwise committing some heroic feat during the heat of battle.

Few think of the woman who flew a BD4D — big desk, four drawers — for 21 years in the Air Force. Or the woman who worked as a medical receptionist in the Coast Guard during World War II. Or even the mother who joined the Army National Guard and ended up on patrol

duty in Iraq after Sept. 11, 2001.

But, just like the soldiers who rushed into battle risking, and in many cases giving, their lives in defense of the United States, those women are veterans, too.

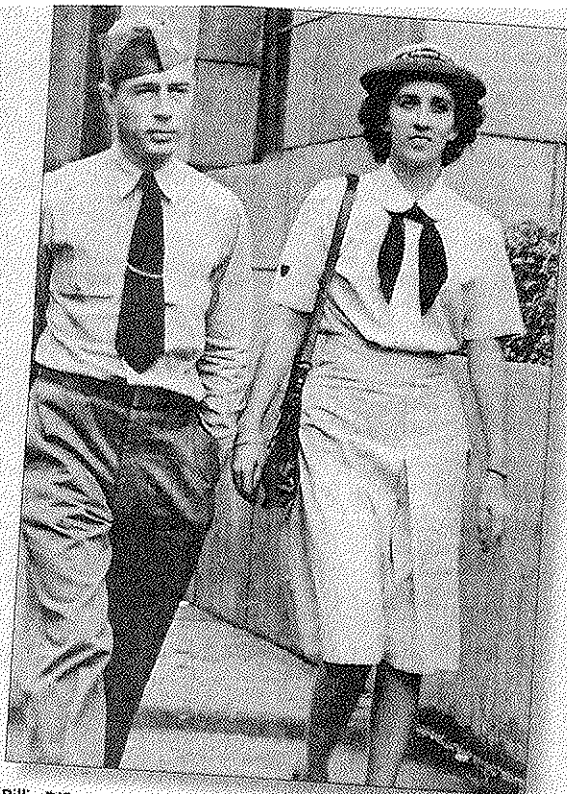
Women make up about 25 percent of all active duty armed forces, says Carole Turner, deputy director of Nevada's Office of Veteran Services. Of the total veteran population, approximately 7 percent are women.

In Nevada, there are about 24,000 women veterans out of about 300,000 veterans, Turner says.

Many people, including veterans, don't

► SEE VETERANS PAGE 4I

*Many women deny themselves benefits*



Billie D'Entremont, right, during her days as a SPAR in the U.S. Coast Guard. She served from 1943 to 1945. COURTESY PHOTO

For video of funeral ceremony: [www.reviewjournal.com/media/video/veteran\\_funeral.html](http://www.reviewjournal.com/media/video/veteran_funeral.html)

Women veterans interested in more information can visit: [www.veterans.nv.gov/WVC/WVS.html](http://www.veterans.nv.gov/WVC/WVS.html)



## EXECUTIVE SNAPSHOT

**A** tonsillectomy at age 8 helped push Carole Turner on the path to nursing. "The doctor hurt me and the nurse helped me," she says.

In post-Watts Riot Los Angeles, she opened Martin Luther King Hospital with two Air Force corpsmen fresh from a tour in Vietnam.

"They taught me everything I know," Turner said. "I felt good about saving anyone's life."

She enlisted in the United States Air Force in 1970. Though a broken leg during flight school kept her from Vietnam, Turner served the Department of Veterans Affairs for more than 30 years afterward.

Her last assignment was national director of Women Veterans Health. After retiring in 2007, Gov. Jim Gibbons appointed her to the deputy executive director post for the state's Office of Veterans Services and her legacy continues.



**Carole Turner**

DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
STATE OF NEVADA OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES

BY SARA CURETON • [scureton@lvbusinesspress.com](mailto:scureton@lvbusinesspress.com) | 702-387-5273

### What are you most proud of?

Without a specific example in mind, just the sense of fulfillment in giving back to those who have given so much. At the end of the day, being able to help a veteran or their family member keeps me motivated and keeps me going.

### If you were not working for the VA in this capacity, what would you be doing with your retirement?

I keep my nursing license active though I haven't practiced since 1990. I would be content just caring for people. I could very easily make full circle working as a nurse or volunteering in a clinical setting. It's all about helping others.

### What is something the people you work with or the veterans you assist would be surprised to know about you?

I adopted my half-brother when he was 18-months-old and raised him as a single parent. When he was 19-years-old, he enlisted in the Navy and now works for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

### Who has influenced you the most?

My boss before my current boss. She was a physician in Washington, D.C. First of all, she broke a glass ceiling within the VA and she didn't compromise her femininity. The respect I had for her and the respect she had for others is something I'll never lose.

### What goals do you have for the future?

In our life and times, there are many people hurting and struggling. I'd like to see society as a whole respect the concerns of the middleman and the down and out. We need to support the people that are our very fabric and be responsive to their needs.

### If money were no object, how would you reward yourself for a job well done?

I can't think of anything monetarily. I just want people to think of me as someone who did what she said she was gonna do.

### What advice do you have for someone looking to follow in your footsteps?

Don't put any limitations on what you can be or what you can do. Have yourself a blank canvas, follow your heart and follow your dreams.



## VETERANS DAY MEMORIES

# Putting country first

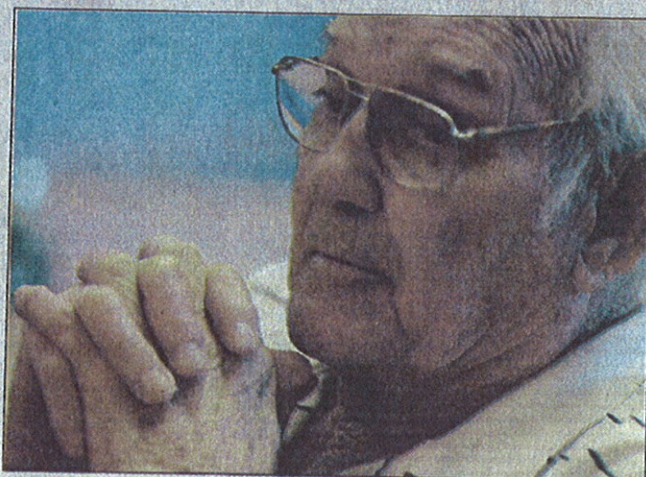


Above, Robert Bailey talks with his wife, Katie, Oct. 29 about his two decades in the U.S. Navy. The couple live at the Nevada State Veterans Home, 100 Veterans Memorial Drive. Below, Bailey reflects on how his life has been shaped by his service in World War II, the Korean War and the Cold War into the early 1960s.

MARLENE KARAS/VIEW

**"It means everything to me. I don't know how to explain it, but it just does."**

**ROBERT BAILEY**  
RESIDENT OF THE NEVADA STATE  
VETERANS HOME, ON HIS SERVICE IN  
THE U.S. NAVY FROM WORLD WAR II  
THROUGH 1963



*Veterans Home resident reflects on his years of military service*

By FRED COUZENS

VIEW STAFF WRITER

When it comes to Veterans Day, Robert Bailey, a highly decorated career Navy man, is at a loss for words.

Not because his memory is failing him, but because the military was a way of life he chose for more than 20 years.

"It means everything to me," said the 82-year-old Navy storekeeper who was discharged from the military in 1963. "I don't know how to explain it, but it just does."

Bailey kept virtually no remembrances of his service to the country.

"I got rid of my pictures and grew out of my uniform, but my daughter might have my medals," Bailey said.

He may not have kept the trinkets of war, but after three dozen years, he still has something that's more precious to him.

Bailey and his wife of 37 years, Katie, are one of three couples who reside at the Nevada State Veterans Home in Boulder City.

November not only means Veterans Day to them, but it's also the couple's anniversary month, and Robert's birthday is on Nov. 23.

He was born and grew up near Shreveport, La., where his father farmed cotton and vegetables, but that wasn't the way of life Robert Bailey wanted.

► SEE BAILEY PAGE 3AA



## ► BAILEY: Veteran, wife are bingo aficionados

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1AA

"I got tired of farming and wanted to get out of there," said the veteran with two Purple Hearts and 14 commendation medals. "So, I signed up right there in Shreveport."

His enlistment took him to various places in the South Pacific — "You name it," he said of the islands he visited during World War II — aboard an amphibious landing ship.

It was in the lesser-known islands of the Philippines

that Robert Bailey took his first hit.

"I got wounded

with shrapnel while we were carrying troops into the beach," he recalled. "The

Jap(anese) were laying for us. I took a live shell while in the boat about 200 yards offshore."

After World War II ended, Robert Bailey stayed in the Navy and found himself fighting again five years later, this time in the Korean War.

"I didn't know what to do," he said of his decision to remain in military service after World War II concluded. "I liked what I was doing, so I stuck with it."

Robert Bailey served a few years at the Naval Station Bremerton, Wash., and later returned to his homeport at the Naval Station San Diego.

When he got out of the Navy at the 32nd Street Naval Station, as it was called, he managed a small parts warehouse while residing in neighboring Chula Vista, Calif.

It was in his newly adopted hometown that he met Katie, a 32-year-old secretary who would become his second wife during ceremonies at a Chula

Vista Lutheran Church. She is now 70.

"Her ex-husband was in the Navy, too, and she had a son on a Little League team; that's how I met her," Robert Bailey said.

Upon marrying in 1971, the Baileys immediately had a large, blended family, sort of the Brady Bunch plus two.

"She had two boys and two girls and I had two boys and two girls," said Robert Bailey, who explained that they all got along together. "We managed.

That's what you get when you fall in love."

Robert and Katie Bailey left Chula

Vista two years ago so they could

live near his daughter,

Debbie Je-

rome of Henderson, and some of their 10 grandchildren. They moved into the veterans home about a year ago.

The Baileys are into bingo big time — little if nothing can interrupt their weekly bingo games — and exercise and even participated in the recent Veterans Olympic Games held in Veterans Memorial Park.

"I won a medal," Robert Bailey said proudly. "My wife won one, too."

The Baileys stay together around the veterans home most of the time and have stuck together through thick and thin.

"Because I love her," said Robert Bailey, explaining why they've been a couple since 1971, with Katie Bailey adding, "For the same reason: Because I love him."

Contact Boulder City View reporter Fred Couzens at [fcouzens@viewnews.com](mailto:fcouzens@viewnews.com) or 279-5133.



**Department of  
Veterans Affairs**

Office of Public Affairs  
Media Relations

Washington, DC 20420  
(202) 461-7600  
[www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

## **News Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
November 17, 2008

### **Secretary Peake Announces Travel Reimbursement Increases for Eligible Veterans**

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today that eligible veterans will see an increase in the mileage reimbursement they receive for travel to VA facilities for medical care.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake announced today that he will use his authority to raise the mileage reimbursement from the 28.5 cents per mile to 41.5 cents per mile for all eligible veterans.

“We owe it to our veterans to give them the best care possible,” said Peake. “The increase will once again provide assistance to our veterans, especially in these difficult economic times, to help offset gasoline costs and to assist veterans with access to the VA’s world-class health system.”

Congress, which mandates such increases, recently provided funding to VA to increase the reimbursement rate, which goes into effect on November 17, 2008. Service connected veterans, veterans receiving VA pensions, and veterans with low incomes are eligible for the reimbursement.

“As I have travelled the country and spoken with many of our veterans, they have expressed the need for such an increase,” added Peake. “We are pleased to be able to provide them with the increase needed and we will continue to work with our veterans to ensure they receive the quality care they need.”

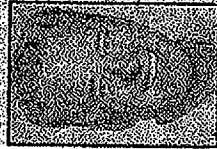
While increasing the payment, the current deductible amounts applied to certain mileage reimbursements will remain frozen at \$7.77 for a one way trip, \$15.54 for a round trip, and capped at a maximum of \$46.62 per calendar month. On January 9, 2009, these deductibles will decrease to \$3 for a one way trip, \$6 for a round trip, with a maximum of \$16 per calendar month. Deductibles can be waived if they cause a financial hardship to the veteran.

###

# VIEWPOINT

A GUEST VIEW Gary Bermeosolo

## *Time is the greatest gift for homebound seniors*



As 2008 comes to an end and we celebrate the holiday season, I wanted to remind each of you, the very best gift you can give a resident of a nursing home is the gift of your time.

I know there are many material items residents could benefit from, but visits always seem to be at the top of their wish list.

As hard as nursing homes may try to maintain a truly home-like environment, the reality is their residents give up a certain amount of control over their environment, schedule and activities when they enter a nursing home, resulting in feelings of loss. For many of them, reduced mobility contributes to feelings of frustration; and separation from home, family, friends and familiar surroundings can result in the loss of identity.

Given these changes, residents often feel "less than" as human beings — and then the holidays arrive and these feelings are compounded.

By giving the gift of your time this holiday season, you can help residents overcome these feelings, enhance their well-being and contribute to their overall quality of life.

Your visits provide opportunities for

**This holiday season, I hope you will spend some quality time with an elderly person who**

**resides in a nursing home. Share a memory, a smile, a laugh or even a tear, for the gift of time is the most valuable gift we have.**

them to be understood and receive emotional support.

Visits help residents feel independent and maintain ties with family, friends and the community. They serve as a link to people, places and events outside the nursing home and bring immediate joy by instilling feelings of warmth and compassion. What gift could possibly top all this?

Remember, family and friends of all ages can join residents as they participate in various holiday-themed outings and activities. Oftentimes you can even invite the resident to a holiday lunch or dinner at your home or an area restaurant.

Maybe you want to join the resident at

their home for one of the facility's holiday parties or, if your family tradition involves having Santa visit your little ones, consider doing this at the nursing home this year, where everyone can enjoy and join in.

If you would like to enjoy a holiday meal with your loved one, check with the facility's dietary department to see if arrangements can be made for you to join the resident during their regularly scheduled meal. Or, if you would prefer something more private, see if arrangements can be made for family and friends to enjoy an on-site meal together at the resident's home.

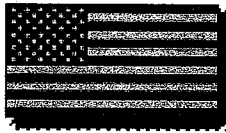
Most importantly, remember, visits aren't just for the holidays. Feelings of loss, separation and loneliness are common throughout the year for many residents.

Give the gift of frequent visits. Ten minutes from your busy day can reassure, cheer and affirm the dignity of loved ones year round.

This holiday season, I hope you will spend some quality time with an elderly person who resides in a nursing home. Share a memory, a smile, a laugh or even a tear, for the gift of time is the most valuable gift we have.

Gary Bermeosolo is the administrator of the Nevada State Veterans Home in Boulder City.





November 20, 2008

## Fernley veterans cemetery official reacts to criticism

The chairman of a board overseeing the Fernley veterans cemetery said Thursday that Sen. Bill Raggio, R-Reno, should apologize for complaining that the cemetery is neglected and not properly maintained.

"It's just an insult," said Stan Jones. "We have an excellent superintendent and staff there. It's a beautiful facility. I don't know where he's coming from. He ought to publicly apologize to the veterans."

Jones said various veterans' organizations work hard to help improve the 40-acre Northern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery. Jones also said that in the six years he has chaired the cemetery board Raggio hasn't attended any formal function at the cemetery and should see the place for himself.

Raggio commented Wednesday at a meeting of the Legislature's Interim Finance Subcommittee on capital improvements, saying the cemetery "just really lacks the dignity I think a veterans cemetery deserves."

Raggio said he got a call from a constituent who was upset at the cemetery's condition after visiting his father's grave there on Veterans Day, saying there weren't even American flags posted.

Tim Tetz, administrator of the Nevada Office of Veterans Services, said the regional Veterans Administration has come out repeatedly to the Fernley cemetery and concluded that it "meets or exceeds" standards.

As for the lack of flags on Veterans Day, Tetz said that event is "to honor the service of veterans who are alive."

"Memorial Day is the day we decorate the graves of our heroes," he said, adding that those events are handled by volunteers, not staff.

Jones said graves always are decorated at Fernley on Memorial Day, adding several hundred people show up on that day for "a huge ceremony."

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## Raggio calls for improvements to Fernley veterans cemetery

BY GEOFF DORNAN  
NEVADA APPEAL CAPITOL BUREAU,

Sen. Bill Raggio, R-Reno, complained Wednesday that the Fernley veterans cemetery is neglected and not properly maintained.

He made the comments at an Interim Finance Subcommittee on capital improvements, telling Public Works Manager Gus Nuñez the Boulder City veterans cemetery is well maintained, well run and "beautiful."

Fernley, in contrast, he said "just really lacks the dignity I think a veterans cemetery deserves."

He said he received a call from a constituent whose father is buried there who was very upset at the condition of the cemetery after visiting there Veterans Day, saying there weren't even American flags posted.

"He was completely disillusioned about the veterans cemetery," Raggio said. "And this constituent is not alone."

Raggio added that he has been concerned about the operation and condition of the Fernley cemetery for some time. He asked staff to get him a report on what's happening there.

The issue was raised during discussion of expansion plans at the southern Nevada cemetery, which recently received a federal grant of \$2.3 million to build a new maintenance facility and service yard.

Raggio said he wants to know why the Fernley cemetery never seems to get those kind of grants.

Tim Tetz, administrator of the Nevada Office of Veterans Services, said those national grants are awarded on the need to build or expand cemeteries. He said the Boulder City cemetery is the second busiest veterans cemetery in the nation with more than three times the number of burials in a month than Fernley has.

"We run out of burial spots in southern Nevada a lot more quickly and, thus, there is a lot more money that flows down there to keep up with the needs," he said.

Fernley and Boulder City, he said, both had major expansions in 2003, and it took until now for Fernley to run out of single burial spots. Now, he said, the office is asking for money to expand Fernley by another 900 burial spots.

In addition, he said, the support group at Fernley has raised \$20,000 for new flagpoles which will be put on the hill where they can be seen from Interstate 80. Last week, he said, they got a grant to light those poles.

As for the condition of the cemetery, he said the regional Veterans Administration has come out repeatedly and said Fernley "meets or exceeds" standards.

As for the lack of flags on Veterans Day, Tetz said that event is "to honor the service of veterans who are alive."

"Memorial Day is the day we decorate the graves of our heroes," he said.  
He said those events are handled by volunteers, not staff.

He said he would be glad to discuss the situation with Raggio and other members of the Legislature.

- Contact reporter Geoff Dornan at [gdornan@nevadaappeal.com](mailto:gdornan@nevadaappeal.com) or 687-8750.

[http://www.nevadaappeal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20081120/NEWS/811199935/1006/NONE&parentprofile=1058&title=Raggio calls for improvements to Fernley veterans cemetery&template=printart](http://www.nevadaappeal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20081120/NEWS/811199935/1006/NONE&parentprofile=1058&title=Raggio%20calls%20for%20improvements%20to%20Fernley%20veterans%20cemetery&template=printart)

State senator is wrong

Send us your news

<< back

Tuesday, November 25, 2008

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"Don't criticize something you don't understand!"

Evidently, State Senator William Raggio, — R-Reno, either forgot this wise advice or chose to ignore it. Recently, the long-serving senator criticized the Northern Nevada Veterans Cemetery as a neglected site and one that is not properly maintained. Raggio based his comment on a constituent who complained of the cemetery's condition and that flags were not flying by each grave on Veterans Day.

Sorry, senator, your constituent confused Veterans Day with Memorial Day.

What ensued was a lawmaker making wild accusations based on incorrect information. Raggio told an Interim Finance Subcommittee in capital improvements that the Fernley cemetery "lacks the dignity a veterans cemetery deserves."

The state has maintained two veterans' cemeteries for 18 years, one in Fernley and the other in Boulder City. The legislature approved a bill in 1987 to fund the two sites, and in 1990, the cemeteries opened. Since that time, both cemeteries have been the final resting place to thousands of veterans.

Raggio also compared the two sites, claiming the Southern Nevada facility was in much better shape than Fernley's. Judging by the hundreds of responses made on various Web sites in Northern Nevada, most Nevadans don't agree with the senator's flawed thinking. If the senator had attended the Memorial Day service, he would have been proud to have experienced the solemn ceremony held on that rainy Monday morning in May.

The Nevada Office of Veterans Affairs took Raggio to the woodshed, advising the senator that the regional Veterans Administration considers the Fernley cemetery "meets or exceeds" standards. Furthermore, Stan Jones, the board's chairman who oversees the cemetery, said Raggio's comments were an insult.

"He ought to publicly apologize to the veterans," Jones demanded.

We wonder if Raggio has recently visited the site before he made his comments. A member of our editorial staff, whose father is buried there, visited the cemetery on Monday and found the facility to be in excellent condition.

Furthermore, we wonder if Raggio served in the military. If he did, he would realize that Veterans Day spawned from Armistice Day, an occasion marking the great sacrifices of veterans and the end of World War I. Not only does the day recognize the sacrifices our veterans have made in previous wars, but it also honors current veterans for their service to their country, their patriotism and their willingness to sacrifice their lives when called to do so.

We are calling on Raggio to push himself away from his Carson City desk and take the 45-minute drive to Fernley to the Northern Nevada Veterans Cemetery. After he visits the site and realizes how much he embarrassed himself with his remarks, he should then publicly apologize to the people of Nevada — especially to veterans — for comments based on the opinion of a select few.

Veterans deserve better respect from a long-serving lawmaker.

Editorials are written by the LVNeditorial board and appear on Wednesdays.

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That one perfect day	Fallon 18-year-old charged in... (5)
Children! State government needs you - to fund the budget	Great-grandmother is a Nevada... (4)

Comments

Guideline 1

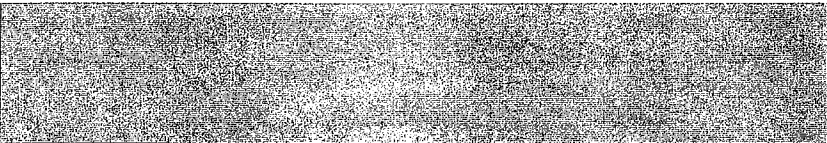
Ask great questions. Share what you know. Correct others politely if they're wrong.



[See all Community Guidelines](#)

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rodsmunch wrote:  
Raggio seems to have lost it lately. First, he said the GOP should move to the left, and now this.

11/26/2008 8:57 AM PST on lahontanvalleynews.com

Recommend

Report abuse



**Reno VA REGIONAL OFFICE**

**5460 Reno Corporate Drive  
Reno, NV 89511**

**Donald D. Iddings  
Director**

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## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Reno Regional Office is responsible for delivering non-medical VA benefits and services to Nevada veterans and their families. This is accomplished through the administration of comprehensive and diverse benefit programs established by Congress, and our goal is to deliver these benefits and services in a timely, accurate, and compassionate manner. Examples of the benefits and services administered by the VA Regional Office are as follows:

- ☐ Disability Compensation, Including Death Compensation Benefits to Eligible Survivors
- ☐ Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Assistance
- ☐ Special Benefits for the Disabled
- ☐ Outreach
- ☐ Certain Burial Benefits

## REGIONAL OFFICE SUMMARY

- A. Location:** Reno, Nevada
- B. Jurisdiction:** State of Nevada and the California Counties of Alpine, Lassen, Modoc and Mono
- C. Regional Office Size:** 93 (*as of 10/17/08*)
- D. Outbased Locations:**
- Las Vegas Field Office  
4800 Alpine Place, Suite 12  
Las Vegas, NV 89107  
Benefits Provided – VR&E and C&P  
FTE -- 15
- E. Outbased BDD Staff:** The Reno Regional Office does not support a BDD Site.
- F. Telephone Services:** VA's national toll-free number, 1-800-827-1000, services all cities in the state.
- The national Insurance program's toll-free number is 1-800-669-8477.
- The Regional Loan Center's toll-free number is 1-888-232-2571.
- The Regional Processing Office's toll-free number is 1-888-GI BILL.

## STAFFING LEVELS FOR FY 08

**FY 08 FTE Ceiling for Reno RO: 89.1**

**Current RO Staffing Level: 93 (as of Pay Period 20)**

**Actual Staffing by Office:**  
(As of 10/15/08)

OFFICE	STAFFING LEVEL
Director's Office	7
Veterans Service Center	71
Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment	12
Information Resource Management/Field ADP	3

## VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS AT THE RENO REGIONAL OFFICE

SERVICE ORGANIZATION	REPRESENTATIVES	PHONE
AMVETS	Michael Kukulski	775-321-4890 (Reno)
	Joe Scamihorn	775-321-4890 (Reno)
	Joe Ody	702-258-3691 (Las Vegas)
DAV	John Hansen	775-321-4895 (Reno)
	Marvin Varias	702-878-7918 (Las Vegas)
MOPH	Daniel La Grand	702-258-0148 (Las Vegas)
Nevada Office of Veteran Services	Timothy Tetz (Executive Director)	775-688-1653
	Carol Turner (Deputy Executive Director)	702-636-3070
	Jeanette Rae	775-321-4881 (Reno)
	Chris Egtvedt	775-321-4883 (Reno)
	Daniel Manley	702-636-3070 (Las Vegas)
	Sharon Wagner	702-636-3070 (Las Vegas)
	Princess Cantrell	702-636-3070 (Las Vegas)
PVA	Tx Vogler	702-731-9722 (Las Vegas)
VFW	Paul Ruprecht	775-321-4885 (Reno)
	Rick Boring	702-258-8904 (Las Vegas)



## VETERAN POPULATION

**National:** 25,346,000 *(taken from the 2003 Statistical Abstract of the United States)*

**State:** 241,000 *(taken from the 2003 Statistical Abstract of the United States)*

1% of National Veteran Population

**Veteran Population Served by the Reno Regional Office:** 241,248 *(as of 2000)*

<b>Gulf War Era</b>	32,220
<b>Vietnam Era</b>	81,736
<b>Korean Conflict</b>	30,938
<b>World War II</b>	31,096
<b>World War I</b>	0
<b>Other Peacetime</b>	65,258

## GENERAL INFORMATION

The Reno Regional Office administers a variety of services and benefits including Compensation and Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment. Other services provided include specially adapted housing grants, benefits counseling, fiduciary/guardianship services, outreach services for the homeless, elderly, minority veterans and women veterans, and public affairs.

### A. COMPENSATION & PENSION

*As of 09/30/08*

KEY MEASURES	FY 08 TARGET	FY 08 PERFORMANCE
<b>Global War On Terror (GWOT)</b>		
Percentage Pending > 1 Year	1%	0.2%
Percentage Pending > 6 Months	13.0%	12.4%
<b>C&amp;P Rating:</b>		
Inventory	3530	4,151
Average Days Pending	123.2	129.3
Station Production Credit	7674	8,044
Average Days to Complete (FYTD)	206.4	216.8
Percentage Pending Over 1 Year	3%	2.3%
DIC Average Days Pending	90 Days	60.2
DIC Average Days to Complete FYTD	120 Days	123.3
<b>C&amp;P Non-Rating:</b>		
Percentage Non-Rating Over 1 Year	2.5%	0.8%
<b>C&amp;P Accuracy:</b>		
Rating	90%	86%
Authorization	95%	94%
Fiduciary	90%	79%
<b>C&amp;P Appeals:</b>		
Remands Pending VBA	35	33
Avoidable Remand Rate (FYTD)	17.0%	18.8%
NOD Pending Timeliness	90 Days	85 Days
Form 9 Pending Timeliness	230 Days	226.8 Days
<b>Fiduciary:</b>		
Fid Ben Appts. Pending >120 Days	10%	0%
Fid Ben Appts. Processed >120 Days	8%	0.7%
Initial Appts. Pending >45 Days	10%	0%
Initial Appts. Processed >45 Days	8%	3.6%
Seriously Past Due Accountings	5%	1.4%

Veterans Receiving Compensation	25,177
Veterans Receiving Pension	2,587
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>27,764</b>
Widows/Parents/Children Receiving DIC	2,019
Widows/Children Receiving Death Pension	614
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,633</b>
<b>Total C&amp;P Benefits Paid Monthly</b>	<b>\$24,303,142</b>

## **B. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND EMPLOYMENT**

*As of 06/30/08*

<b>KEY MEASURES</b>	<b>FY 08 TARGET</b>	<b>FYTD PERFORMANCE</b>
Outcome Accuracy	94%	86%
Days to Entitlement	55 Days	48.2
SEH Rehabilitation Rate (including Independent Living)	76%	84.4%
Rehabilitation Rate	75%	80.5%
% of Cases in Interrupted Status	12%	9%
Average Days in Evaluation and Planning	105 Days	60
Fiscal Accuracy	85%	83.6%

**Summary:** The VR&E staff continues to work towards achieving all of its goals for FY08. To date, the staff has met or exceeded five of its seven goals.

Applications Received ( <i>during FY08</i> )	887
Veterans in Evaluation (including Extended Eval)	188
Veterans in Training Programs	390
Veterans in Employment Services	31
Veterans in Independent Living Programs	10
<b>Total Program Participants</b>	<b>709</b>
<b>Total Rehabilitations (<i>during FY08</i>)</b>	<b>122</b>

### C. TOTAL INTERVIEWS -- PUBLIC CONTACT

Personal Interviews (Monthly average FY 08)

1,143

Telephone Interviews are no longer taken at this office effective 03/01/07.

The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) is consolidating telephone calls to centralized call centers across the nation. Goals for this national initiative are to provide more consistent and quality of service; reduce the impact of high volume call on specific offices and increase claims processing capacity. All veterans' inquiries regarding VBA programs should be referred to the national 1-800-827-1000 number. Callers should not be referred to a local Regional Office telephone number as this will circumvent the National Call Center initiative; and, therefore have the potential of not providing timely quality service to our nation's veterans and their families. Calls will be answered by Veterans Service Representatives who can respond to a wide range of questions from claims status to benefits eligibility.

### D. CONGRESSIONAL CORRESPONDENCE

The Reno Regional Office provides service to Senators Harry Reid (D) and John Ensign (R) and to Representatives Dean Heller (R), Shelley Berkley (D) and John Porter (R). Reno RO has a less active veteran population. That activity is reflected in the small number of inquiries coming from the congressional staff.

OFFICE	NUMBER OF INQUIRIES (FY 08)
Senator Harry Reid	172
Senator John Ensign	118
Congressman Dean Heller	20
Congresswoman Shelley Berkley	105
Congressman Jon Porter	99
Others (such as Central Office and outside the state of Nevada Congressional District)	57
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>571</b>

## REGIONAL OFFICE DEMOGRAPHICS

*As of 06/30/08*

<b>TOTAL EMPLOYEES</b>	<b>MINORITIES</b>	<b>WHITE</b>	<b>VETERANS</b>	<b>DISABLED VETERANS</b>
<b>93</b>	52.69%	47.31%	60.22%	26.9%
<b>Area Demographics</b>	29.1%	68.5	16.0%	Unknown

### VETERAN-EMPLOYEE DEMOGRAPHICS:

<b>Period of Service</b>	<b>Number of Employees</b>
<b>Gulf War Era</b>	32
<b>Vietnam Era</b>	16
<b>Korean Conflict</b>	0
<b>World War II</b>	0
<b>World War I</b>	0
<b>Other Peacetime</b>	9

## **PUBLIC RELATIONS**

VSC (Reno) attends meetings with representatives of the Senior Citizens Center and Gospel Mission (homeless shelter). We participate monthly in the Transition Assistance Program/Disabled Transition Assistance Program (TAP/DTAP) sessions at the Naval Air Station, Fallon. VA Office personnel from Las Vegas attend meetings with representatives of the Senior Citizens from Henderson and Boulder City, Nevada, St. Vincent's (homeless shelter), and participate in the Nellis Air Force Base Retirement Seminars and TAP/DTAP sessions. A representative of the VA Office visits with Congressional Staff Members on a monthly basis.

The Director and VSC Manager meets quarterly with National Service Officers from accredited veteran service organizations and monthly with the local chapter for Former POWs. The Director also attends quarterly meetings with VSOs and Congressional Staff hosted at the Reno VAMC.

Regional Office personnel participated in a stand-down on January 22, 2008 in Reno, NV. The Reno Regional Office, Reno VA Medical Center and local public assistance agencies participate in the event. Veterans Assistance Office personnel in Las Vegas participated in a stand-down on November 6, 2007. The VAO, VA Medical Center and local public assistance agencies supported this event.

In July 2008 the Director attended the monthly Reno Area Alliance for the Homeless (RAAH) meeting as well as the quarterly VSO/Congressional Briefing at the Reno VAMC. He also met with Under Secretary Dunne in Washington, DC to discuss station performance.

August brought the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) convention to Las Vegas, which the Director attended, representing the RO. Secretary Peake also visited Las Vegas to tour the new VA hospital grounds, the Director was among those who toured with the Secretary. The Director also attended the Director's workshop held in Chicago. Finally, the Director attended the FPOW ceremony held in Reno on September 19, 2008.

## **LOCAL ISSUES & SPECIAL PROJECTS**

According to the Census Bureau latest state population estimates, Nevada, for the 19<sup>th</sup> straight year, was the fastest growing state. Our population of 2,414,807, rose 3.5 percent for the year ended at mid-year 2005. Overall, the population in the country as a whole rose 0.9 percent. Nevada is now the 35<sup>th</sup> most populous state. Population for Las Vegas/North Las Vegas/Henderson is 1,576,205 and Reno/Sparks is 339,447.

Latest statistics show that proportionally, Nevada has the second highest percentage of veterans in the 48 contiguous states.

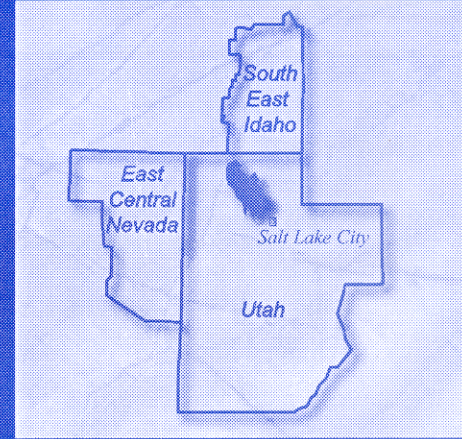
A recent report released from the Nevada state demographer estimates Nevada's population will increase by half over the next 20 years, to an estimated 4 million residents. The majority of the growth is expected to be in southern Nevada.

The Reno Regional Office was selected as a Challenge Training site and hosted Post-Determination training in September. Twelve trainees from six Regional Offices attended the training.



# Patient Newsletter

VA SALT LAKE CITY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM



**"TO SERVE THE VETERAN WHO SERVED US"**

Fall 2008

## MEDICAL FOSTER HOME PROGRAM FOR VETERANS



The VA Salt Lake City Health Care System (VASLCHCS) is pleased to announce the development of the Medical Foster Home program to reach the growing needs of the veteran population.

"The Medical Foster Home is a unique partnership of adult foster home and

Home Based Primary Care," said Josh Brown, VASLCHCS Licensed Clinical Social Worker and coordinator of the Medical Foster Home Program. There are many veterans who live alone and independently for years through the support of assistive devices and home care services. Eventually the veteran may decline to the point that it is no longer safe to remain living alone. Traditionally, this situation is resolved by nursing home placement; however, the veteran may refuse nursing home care, instead accepting serious risks. "This is where the Medical Foster Home program steps in to offer a safe, favorable, and less costly alternative to the veteran," said Brown.

Medical Foster Home finds caregivers in the community who are willing to take a veteran into their home and provide 24-hour supervision as well as needed personal assistance. The expectation is that this is a long-term commitment, where the veteran may

live for the remainder of his or her life. The caregivers are paid \$1,500 to \$2,500 based upon the level of care needed by the veteran. For example, a cost of \$1,500 for someone with mild dementia who is independent in activities of daily living but requires supervision, to \$2,500 for someone who is incontinent, bed-bound, and needs to be turned every four hours. This is a very cost-effective alternative to nursing home placement and allows for a safe home type environment for veterans.

This payment is made by the veteran directly to the caregiver monthly. This includes room and board, 24-hour supervision, assistance with medications, and whatever personal care is needed.

"We are currently searching for individuals who are interested in becoming future Medical Foster Home

*(continues page 2)*



Department of  
Veterans Affairs

**GEORGE E. WAHLEN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER**

VA SALT LAKE CITY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

500 FOOTHILL DRIVE • SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84148

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1-800-613-4012 EXT. 4094 OR 1-801-582-1565 EXT. 4094



## Medical Foster Home Program (cont.)

caregivers,” said Brown. Potential caregivers must be:

- Over the age of 21
- Own or renting a home
- Read, write, and speak English
- Complete a Criminal Background Check (BCI)
- First Aid and CPR are certified
- Allow an Interdisciplinary Treatment Team into your home for monthly visits
- Willing to accept, participate in, and follow the veteran’s treatment plan

“The Medical Foster Home program allows community members an opportunity to serve our veterans who have served us in maintaining and ensuring our freedoms,” said Brown. If you or some one you know is interested in receiving more information about this exciting program, please contact Josh Brown, coordinator, Medical Foster Home Program, at (801) 582-1565, extension 2180.

September 11, 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

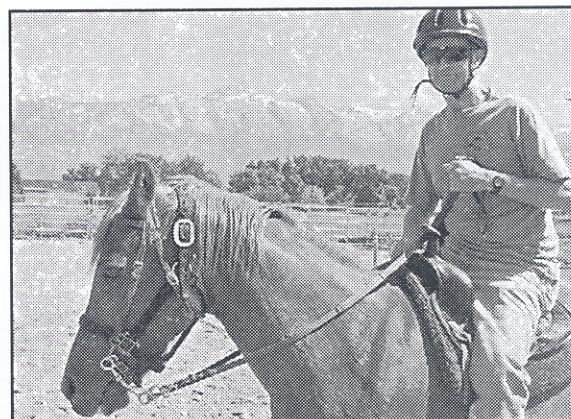
I would like to relate the benefits I have received from Recreation Therapy by writing about some of the events of my life’s personal story.

My name is David Wood, I’m 48 years old, single, and I’ve worked mostly in construction. After returning home from my last deployment to the Philippines in spring 2007, I decided to learn to fly sailplanes, or gliders. The first lesson and introductory flight was on August 17, 2007. About two weeks later, on flight number nine, my instructor and I suffered a crash in the glider while landing. My instructor had some scrapes and bruises. I, on the other hand, was very seriously injured due mostly to head trauma and was transported by helicopter ambulance to the University of Utah Hospital for emergency care. Approximately one week after being admitted, and after making some good progress, my brainstem was attacked by Guillain Barre Syndrome, putting me in a coma for about a week. Some people questioned if I would live.

While in the VA Hospital I was visited by VA Recreation Therapist, Emily Potter, who made me aware of the recreation therapy program for patients. My doctors at the VA encouraged me to get involved in recreation therapy to help my recovery process. While in the VA Hospital, I went on the bowling outing two or three times, cross-country skiing a couple of times, and to the painting and art groups nearly every week. Since being discharged from the VA I continue to stay active in recreation therapy activities, such as horse back riding therapy.

I have cross-country skied since the early 1980’s, and for about 10 seasons worked or volunteered locally at the Solitude Nordic Center in Big Cottonwood Canyon. VA Recreation Therapy had cross-country ski trips each week, so I knew I had to go and relive the fun on the snow again. Compared to how I use to ski, it

*(continues page 3)*





## Veteran's Letter (cont.)

was frustrating to say the least. My strength was diminished and my balance suffered, as did my technique. My mind knew what to do, but couldn't make my physically impaired body work like it use to. I was let down, but I knew when my body improved, so could my skiing and other physical activities. On the bright side on that ski trip my physical therapist at the time, Megan, went with us for her first time cross-country skiing, and she wanted to observe me to see if I could successfully do some physical tasks I needed to be able to do before I could leave the hospital. I passed off the tasks, and I was able to give Megan and Emily some pointers for skiing, and it gave me something to work for and see my progress next winter. Participating in recreation therapy activities has been very beneficial to me for the following reasons:

1. The outdoor exercise activities helped me discover where my limitations were, and to see for myself how much improvement I've made.
2. Set some goals and areas to improve in.
3. Learn some areas where I have new interests or talents.
4. Fostered new friendships with people I've met through recreation therapy.

I believe it's beneficial for any veteran to get involved with recreation therapy. Even if you're in a situation where you've reached a plateau in your life, these activities will help challenge you beyond your current perceived limitations. The programs help take your mind off your life worries and help you develop talents. Just remember, you can do more than you think.

Sincerely,

David Wood

## Missed Opportunities

During your days in the military, your actions affected your fellow comrades. The same principal applies to not keeping your health care appointments. When you do not show up for an appointment and neglect to call ahead to cancel, you create a "missed opportunity" for your fellow veteran to be scheduled for an appointment in that same slot.

Missed opportunities put everyone at a disadvantage. For the veterans who fail to keep their appointments, they miss the opportunity to maintain good health care. Additionally, when an appointment is not cancelled properly, it is too late to reschedule another veteran for the vacant slot. This can result in a longer wait for a fellow veteran who needs an appointment.

If you know that you cannot make an appointment, it is important that you call our Scheduling Department at (801) 584-2575, and cancel at least 24 hours before your appointment time. By calling to cancel an appointment and schedule a fellow veteran who is waiting to be seen in that timeslot.





## Patient Safety Corner

### Partners In Safety

An important hospital safety standard reads, **“Encourage the active involvement of patients and their families in the patient’s own care as a patient safety standard.”** At the Salt Lake City VA Medical Center we are in the process of “remodeling” all the bedside tables with a safety message which outlines several staff behaviors you can expect while in our care. The “Table Top” message reminds patients to expect the following safety behaviors from all our staff:

- Introduce themselves and wear a name badge
- Insure you have a name band on at all times—if you have allergies you should have an allergy band as well
- Identify you correctly before performing any procedures—you will be asked to state your full name as well
- Wash their hands with soap and water or use the gel sanitizer before providing your care and when they leave the room—families should also practice this safety measure.
- Label laboratory specimens in your presence—so nothing gets mixed up
- Review the medications you are taking and provide you with a list of medications prescribed when you leave the hospital
- Use the barcode technology when administering medications—the nurse will scan your name band and then scan your medications—this safety measure ensures you get the correct medications your doctor has ordered
- Provide you with non-skid slippers socks and a walker (excluding 3A) in your room to use to reduce the risk of falling

A patient safety **HOTLINE** has been established—**extension 1145**. We are asking patients and families to report **WHERE** there are problems and efforts will be concentrated in that area to improve performance. It is your health, your wellness, and your opportunity to make the medical center a safer hospital. Please join us, by being a partner in your safety.



## Serving Veterans Close to Home

The VA Salt Lake City Health Care System (VASLCHCS) serves veterans in the largest geographic area within the Department of Veterans Affairs. In addition to the services provided at the George E. Wahlen Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Salt Lake City, the VASLCHCS provides veterans with routine primary care and preventative screening services at eight Community Based Outpatient Clinics.

### How are we doing?

Surveys of the Health Experience of Patients (SHEP) surveys are designed to measure veterans' perceptions on Veterans Health Administration's ten (10) Core

Veterans Healthcare Service Standards (VHSS) listed below:

- **Access** - We will provide you with timely access to health care.
- **Preferences** - We will involve you in decisions about your care.
- **Education** - We will strive to provide information and education about your health care that you understand.
- **Emotional Support** - We will provide support to meet your emotional needs.
- **Coordination of Care (Visit and Overall)** - We will take responsibility for coordination of your care.

- **Continuity** - One health care team will be in charge of your care.
- **Courtesy** - We will treat you with courtesy and dignity.
- **Involvement of Family & Friends** - We will provide opportunities to involve your family in your care when appropriate.
- **Physical Comfort** - We will strive to meet your physical comfort needs.
- **Transition** - We will provide smooth transition between your inpatient and outpatient care.

### SHEP Survey results fiscal year 2008 through June 2008

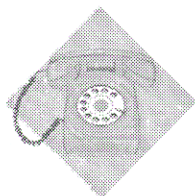
	Inpatient Overall Quality	Outpatient Overall Quality	Provider Wait Time	Appt. as Soon as as Wanted Established Patients	Appt. As Soon As as Wanted New Patients
National	79.2	78.1	76.4	86.2	87.7
VISN 19	82.6	81.7	80.7	85.2	86.2
SALT LAKE CITY	83.8	82.5	80.9	87.5	89.0

### VISN 19 Nurse Health Line Program: 1-866-369-8020

The VA Rocky Mountain Network (VISN 19) offers you access to Nurse Health Line, a 24-hour health information service. Through a toll-free telephone number, 1-866-369-8020, you will be able to reach experienced registered nurses who will provide you with:

- Confidential valuable level of service
- Information to help you become a better informed health care consumer
- Tools to be an active participant in your own health care

*Nurse Health  
Line Program*



Nurse Health Line cannot provide you with:

- Information regarding eligibility for care or disability benefits
- Availability of clinical appointments
- Prescription refills or test results
- Connection with your primary care provider
- Diagnosis of your problem, nor recommend specific treatment

Nurse Health Line is not a substitute for your doctor's care.  
For medical emergency dial 911





# VETERANS DAY

HONORING ALL  
WHO SERVED

NOVEMBER 11, 2008

